



Ethics in Islam

Dr. Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi



مركز دراسات التشريع
الإسلامي والأخلاق
Research Center for Islamic
Legislation and Ethics
عضو في جامعة حمد بن خليفة
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Contents

Introduction7

Chapter 1:

Ethics in Islam: Definition, Philosophy, Status, Objectives, and Methods 15

1.1 Definitions And Concepts Of Islamic Ethics 16

1.2 The Status Of Ethics In Islam 36

1.3 Higher Objectives And Goals Of Islamic Ethics 48

1.4 Methods Of Achieving The Objectives Of Ethics in Islam 80

1.5 Effects Of Faith-Based Education On Controlling Instincts And Habits 100

1.6 The Need For The Islamic Community And Islamic Regime 118

Chapter 2:

Research on Ethics 123

2.1 History Of Moral Philosophy In The West 124

2.2 Modern Moral Philosophies In The West 129

2.3 Pre-Islamic Arab Moral Philosophy 140

2.4 Arab Moral Philosophy After Islam 147

2.5 Religious Ethics And The Theory Of Divine Revelation 187

2.6 Standards Of Ethical Judgments In Islam 215

2.7 Review Of Khalid Mohammed Khalid’s Book
“*Either This Or The Flood*” And His Thesis On Secular Ethics 223

Chapter 3:

The Foundations of Moral Philosophy in Islam 239

3.1 Moral Obligation..... 240

3.2 Moral Responsibility.....251

3.3 Punishment..... 265

3.4 Intentions And Motives..... 275

3.5 Work And Exerted Effort 283

3.6 Complementary Principles To The Five Foundations
Of Moral Philosophy In Islam 293

3.7 The Three Higher Transcendental Values And Their
Relation To Islam And Its Moral Philosophy..... 300

Chapter 4:

Applied Ethics 309

Prologue: The Importance Of Applied Ethics (Human And Divine) 310

4.1 Divine Ethics: Human Morality Toward The Divine 313

4.2 Individual Ethics 330

4.3 Collective Human Ethics 363

Introduction

"In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful. [All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the Worlds - the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship, and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path; the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger, or of those who have gone astray" (Holy Qur'an, 1:1-7).

May Allah's blessings be upon His Prophets and messengers, whom he sent forth to people in order to bring them good tidings, to warn them, to guide them out of ignorance, and to help them serve in the noblest human functions. This function is to know Allah by worshiping Him, enacting His laws, establishing justice on His earth, developing His earth, and enjoying the sustenance He provides. May Allah's blessings be upon the Prophet Mohammed (Peace be upon Him), the last Prophet, with whom Allah sent His last holy book, the Holy Qur'an, to guide all people out of the darkness into the light, and to show them the straight path. Blessings be upon the Prophet's Family and his Companions, who believed, followed, and supported him, and upon all who follow in their footsteps.

I believe that morality is an essential component of my inner being; for me, it is the very essence of my Islamic culture. The deeper I delve into my studies of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, and the more I listen to Islamic scholars, the more I am drawn to issues of morality and ethics. I was first introduced to the subject through the works of Al-Ghazali (d. AH 505), particularly his well-known book *The Revival of Religious Sciences* and one of his later publications, *A Methodology for Worshipers*. Interestingly, morality is a central topic in both books. In fact, the

second half of *The Revival* is dedicated to discussions of ethics and moral behavior, namely *The Third Quarter: The ways to perdition* and *The Fourth Quarter: The ways to salvation*, with 10 chapters on the subject in each quarter. Later on, specifically during high school and while studying at university, I discovered the writings of Ibn Taymiya (d. AH 728) and his student Ibn Al-Qayyim (d. AH 751). I found that ethics was a major theme in their books, along with the writings of other scholars from the same school. I found their perspective more well-defined than Al-Ghazali's, whose views were heavily influenced by Sufism, which led him to some questionable conclusions. Ibn Taymiya and his followers, conversely, based their work only on the text of the Holy Qur'an and trusted Sunnah sources, which made their conclusions more powerful and closer to the truth of the Holy Qur'anic text.

At the College of Islamic Theology, we studied moral philosophy using Dr. Mohammed Yusuf Musa's textbook *Studies in Moral Philosophy*. However, it was not Dr. Musa who taught us this course, as he had already left the college to dedicate his life to the study of Islamic jurisprudence; instead, it was Dr. Mansur Ali Ragab who taught us. In our sophomore year, we studied *History of Moral Theory and Its Applications*, and we were taught this subject by the author himself, the late Sheikh Abu Bakr Dhikri. This textbook was part of a course on Islamic philosophy; we took a different course on the subject every year, in addition to courses on classical and modern logic.

The Islamic philosophy we focused on was the Peripatetic Islamic School of Philosophy, represented in the works of Al-Kindi (d. AH 256), Al-Farabi (d. AH 339), and Ibn Sina/Avicenna (d. AH 427), along with the writings of their successors in the East. We also studied the works of Ibn Bajjah (d. AH 533), Ibn Al-Tufayl (d. AH 581), and Ibn Rushd Al-Hafeed (d. AH 595), along with the works of their successors in the West. Although these philosophers are often considered to be the founders of Islamic philosophy, they are, in fact, scholars of Greek philosophy, which grew out of the writings of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, as well as their disciples later on. It is undeniable that these students of Greek philosophy tried to have their own voices and perspectives; however, it should be noted that they experienced a conflict between their religious beliefs and the philosophy they studied. This conflict motivated them to attempt to develop a reconciliatory approach, but philosophy was always more prominent in their works. They even called Aristotle "The First Teacher", even though the first teacher for all Muslims is the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), who was praised in the Holy Qur'an: "And indeed, you are of a great moral character," (68:4) and "We have not sent you, [Oh, Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds" (21:107). Nevertheless, these philosophers were far better off than Ikhwan Al-Safa, who engaged more in "fabrication" than "reconciliation".

Although the College of Islamic Theology offered courses on Islamic philosophy, I do not think my professors actually believed in it. At least, they were anything but ardent proponents of this school of thought. My professors adopted eclectic and critical approaches toward Western writings in general. For example, Dr. Hammouda Ghuraba, whose dissertation is entitled *Avicenna between Religion and Philosophy*, and Dr. Abd Al-Haleem Mahmoud, who taught us for two years, often said: “Philosophy has no conclusions. It presents arguments and their counterarguments at the same time.”⁽¹⁾ In short, my study of philosophy was part of my college education, but it was never part of my belief system. Nevertheless, it definitely helped me to develop critical thinking skills, to expand my knowledge base, and it helped me to better understand and engage in discussions with “the other”.

Fortunately, I did not learn about morality from Sufi sources, such as Al-Ghazali's books, alone. I learned about ethics and morality from a variety of sources, and I applied a comparative approach to diverse perspectives on the subject. I compared the different Sufi views to each other and to those of philosophers and scholars of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. For example, I studied the works of Ibn Miskawayh (d. AH 421), Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani (d. AH 502), particularly his *Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of the Shari'a*, Ibn Al-Jawzi (d. AH 597), Ibn Abd Al-Salam (d. AH 660), Al-Nawawi (d. AH 676), Ibn Taymiya (d. AH 728), and Ibn Al-Qayyim (d. AH 751), among many others. I am fortunate, and we are all fortunate, that Allah has provided us with guidance in this regard: “And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance” (Holy Qur'an, 55:7-9). Muslims are required to maintain this balance, which is the defining criterion of the “middle-ground Ummah”. Allah says: “And thus We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you” (Holy Qur'an, 2:143).

Many Egyptian scholars who studied in Europe, both from Al-Azhar and secular universities, have written extensively on various theories and issues of moral philosophy and ethics. However, our Muslim societies, or the Ummah which extends from Indonesia and Malaysia in the east to Morocco and Mauritania in the west, are still in need of a strong Islamic voice that speaks with authority on these topics. This voice needs to be able to conduct extensive research and to confidently engage in dialogue with prominent philosophers across the world, to present an Islamic perspective based on Qur'anic moral theory. This voice also needs to be capable of explaining the principles underlying this theory, its terminologies, and its moral guidelines. To this end, the world is in need of a distinguished Muslim figure whose faith-based views are widely accepted and respected. One such

(1) Mahmoud, Abd Al-Haleem. AD 1400. “Philosophy.” *Al-Buhūth*, 141:5.

figure was Al-Azhar University Professor Mohammed Abdallah Draz who studied at Sorbonne University in France. His doctoral dissertation, *La Morale du Koran* (*The Moral World of the Qur'an*), proved to be quite a groundbreaking treatise that stirred significant debate in both France and the Muslim world. He even called his efforts to defend this thesis a *jihad*.

The fact that Dr. Draz's dissertation focused on the Holy Qur'an does not by any means suggest that we can do without the Sunnah, which is essentially an explanation of the Holy Qur'an. Allah says: "And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought" (Holy Qur'an, 16:44). The Holy Qur'an is the foundation against which all ideas are measured, but other sources, such as the Sunnah, are also accepted. In fact, logical deduction, scholarly consensus, cultural norms, and considerations of public wellbeing are all valid sources. Although Dr. Draz did not publish his book in Arabic, as he did with his other books such as *The Great News*, Dr. Abd Al-Sabour Shaheen, Professor at Dar Al-Ulum College, has published an Arabic translation of *La Morale du Koran*. Dr. Draz's books, including *The Moral World of the Qur'an*, *The Principles of Moral Ethics*, and his other works on the subject will serve as the main resource for our discussions on moral philosophy in Islam.

Forty years ago, I announced that I would write two books: one on ethics in Islam and the other on Islamic creed. Although I have not had the opportunity to work on the ethics book until now, I have discussed both topics in several works, including my latest book, *Faith and Life*. I have also contributed to various publications on ethics and Islamic creed intended for high schools in Qatar; moreover, I have published a series of treatises on the existence of Allah, monotheism, and other topics, but they have not yet been collected into a single volume. I have also published another book, *The Role of Moral Values and Ethics in Islamic Economics*, which discusses the ethics of production, consumption, and distribution.

In my introduction to *The Role of Moral Values and Ethics in Islamic Economics*, I state that, in essence, Islam is a message of moral values, as exemplified in the hadith: "I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct."⁽¹⁾ It is no surprise that Islam establishes a strong connection between morality and faith, so much so that anyone who cannot be trusted cannot be described as faithful⁽²⁾. The same applies to anyone who goes to bed on a full stomach knowing that his neighbor

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8952), Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fi Husn Al-Khuluq* (273), and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārikh Al-Mutaqaddimīn* (2/613). It was also narrated in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with an addition, supported by Al-Dhahabi, and classified by Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādith Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (25).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Malik by Ahmed (12383), Abu Ya'la (2863), and Al-Albani who corrected it in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi'* (3004).

is hungry,⁽¹⁾ and to anyone who commits adultery or drinks alcohol⁽²⁾. Faith also requires moral values such as those stated in the hadith: “He who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment let him show hospitality to his guest, do no harm to his neighbor, and speak good or remain silent.”⁽³⁾

Moral values are also closely tied to acts of worship. Praying, for example, is an act of worship that “prohibits immorality and wrongdoing” (Holy Qur’an, 29:45), whereas charity and charitable acts “purify them and cause them to increase” (Holy Qur’an, 9:103). Fasting is also related to moral values, as it “was decreed upon you as upon those before you that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 2:183), and so is the pilgrimage where “what reaches Him is piety from you” (Holy Qur’an, 22:7), but not the animals sacrificed as charity during the pilgrimage. If these acts of worship do not translate into moral behavior, they lose their value, as indicated in the hadith: “It may be that a person praying Qiyam at night gains nothing but staying up late, and it may be that a fasting person gains nothing from his fast but hunger,”⁽⁴⁾ and “Whoever does not give up saying and doing falsehoods, Allah is in no need for his abandoning food and drink.”⁽⁵⁾

Islam establishes a moral code for social interactions based on the values of truthfulness, honesty, justice, strong family ties, and kindness toward others. In fact, the moral system established by Islam applies to all human endeavors; there is no separation between morals and science, politics, economics, or even warfare. Moral values are at the core of Islamic lifestyle. Moral values, such as freedom, dignity, justice, and equality, among others,⁽⁶⁾ stem from a set of fundamental articles of faith, including the belief in Allah, His messengers, and justice in the afterlife. These moral values manifest themselves in moral acts, such as loving Allah, hoping for His mercy, fearing His punishment, relying on Him, and being truthful unto Him.

Muslim scholars from different academic traditions have included ethics as an integral part of their work. Some Sufi scholars have gone so far as to claim that Sufism is all about ethics and moral values: “Sufism is morality. Whoever is of a

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Tabarani (1/259), Al-Bazzar (7429), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (3874), Al-Haythami in *Majma‘Al-Zawā‘id* (13554), and Ibn Hajar in *Al-Qawl Al-Musaddad* (1/21).

(2) This is a reference to the hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah: “Anyone who commits adultery, drinks alcohol, or steals is not faithful while committing these sins.” in Al-Bukhari in his chapter on injustice and coercion (2475) and in Muslim’s *Sahīh* in his chapter on faith (47).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on manners (6018) and Muslim in the chapter on faith (47).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8856), Ibn Majah (1690), and Al-Hakim (1/431) who, along with Al-Dhahabi, corrected it.

(5) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on fasting (1903), Ahmed (9839), Abu Dawud (2362), Al-Tirmidhi (707), and Ibn Majah (1689).

(6) See *The Role of Moral Values and Ethics in Islamic Economics*.

higher moral status than you is more of a Sufi than you are.”⁽¹⁾ Other Sufi scholars define Sufism as “being truthful with Allah and acting morally toward His creation.” This latter definition is rather redundant, because “being truthful” is in itself a moral act. Thus, we can equate faith with ethics, which is supported in the Holy Qur’an: “They who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice - those will have security, and they are [rightly] guided” (6:82). This verse clearly states that injustice is the antithesis of faith.⁽²⁾ In fact, it is impossible to engage in any human endeavor, be it of a religious or secular nature, individualistic or collective, material or spiritual, without having an ethical framework and moral guidance.

Let us all join those supporting and promoting moral values that are based on faith and science. A nation established upon a solid foundation of faith and moral values can never be defeated; Allah will support it as long as its people are guided by His messengers and the intellect of its scholars. In summary, religious and secular scholars, scientists, artists, and poets all agree that ethics is necessary for individuals and societies alike, as so eloquently put by the Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawqi:

All success in life goes back to moral character

Thus, abide by morals for your life to matter.

A soul living morally is in utter bliss

But if evil takes over, it is in the abyss.

He also writes:

Nations last as long as their morals do

If morals are gone, so nations too.

And:

If people's morals fail to materialize

Mourn them and wail over their demise.

Ethics should be lauded based on faith and reason, because a nation founded upon strong faith and ethics will never be defeated. It will be supported by Allah in all areas, and it will provide true guidance to its future generations who will lead it along the right path, based upon a proud heritage of Islamic faith and intellectual endeavor.

(1) This is a quote from Abu Bakr Mohammed Ibn Ali Ibn Jaffar Al-Kittani. See *Al-Risāla Al-Qushayriya* (2/442), *Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* (3/52), and *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (1/463).

(2) Also see the hadith: When the following verse was revealed: “They who believe and do not mix their belief with injustice” (6:83), the companions of the Prophet asked, “Who amongst us has not done injustice to himself?” Allah revealed: “No doubt, joining others in worship with Allah is a great injustice indeed.” (31.13); Narrated by Al-Bukhari (3360) via Ibn Masoud.

At the inauguration ceremony of the Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, I promised to resume working on my book about ethics in Islam and to have it published by the Center. I am very pleased that this book has now been published as a collaborative effort between the Qaradawi Center for Islamic Reform, directed by Dr. Mohammed Khalifa Hassan, and the Research Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics, directed by Dr. Tariq Saed Ramadan. I would like to thank the directors and staff of both centers for their efforts in making this book possible, and I thank Allah, first and foremost, for helping me to write this book, and I hope that by His acceptance its readers will draw great benefit from it.

Dr. Sheikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi
9 April 2015

Chapter 1

Ethics in Islam: Definition, Philosophy, Status, Objectives, and Methods

1.1 Definitions And Concepts Of Islamic Ethics

Literat Definitions Of Ethics

The Arabic word for “ethics” is أخلاق (pronounced *akhlāq*), which is the plural of خُلُق (pronounced *khuluq*). The singular form is the one used in the Holy Qur’an as a descriptor of the Prophet (PBUH): “And indeed, you are of a great moral character” (68:4). In this verse, the phrase “moral character” is used to translate the singular خُلُق.

The word خُلُق (*khuluq*) seems to be derived from the same root as خَلَق (pronounced *khalq*), which means “creation”. This linguistic connection has been subject to much discussion. For example, Abu Hayyan Al-Tawhidi, one of the most influential philosophers of the 10th century, attempts to account for the relationship between these two concepts as follows: “The word for *moral character* is derived from the word for *creation*, for it is impossible to change moral character, just as it is impossible to change Allah’s creation. However, it is not wrong or futile to encourage people to improve their moral character; the value of good morals is unquestionable. For instance, a person with a dark complexion can scrub himself with soap and water, not to have a lighter complexion, but to reach a more pure state.”⁽¹⁾ Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani (d. AH 502) offers another analysis of this linguistic connection. He postulates that “moral character and creation are two sides of the same coin. Creation has to do with the physical features that can be perceived visually, whereas moral character has to do with personal qualities that cannot be perceived directly.”⁽²⁾ The similarities between moral character and physical appearance are undeniable. For one, physical features cannot be changed, but they can be made to look more beautiful. The same applies to moral character; one cannot change his innate moral character, but it can be improved. Moral character comprises both innate and acquired personal traits that are part of who we are, as Al-Mutanabbi (d. AH 354) writes:

What honor is in a young lad’s handsome face

If his actions and manners show no grace?

Nevertheless, beauty is quite often a true indicator of good moral character, as so eloquently expressed by Mihyar Al-Daylami (d. AH 428):

Nobody but him is so perfect, for the Creator’s powers show on him

He is as perfect on the inside as what you see, for looks tell of manners

(1) Al-Tawhidi, *Al-Imtāʿ wal-Muʾanasah*, (1/148-9).

(2) Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani, *Al-Dharʿa ilā Makārim Al-Sharʿa* (39).

Al-Mucjam Al-Wasīt Dictionary defines الخُلُق “moral character” as “a set of stable personal traits that motivate actions, good or bad.”⁽¹⁾ This definition, which is adopted by the Arabic Language Academy, is based on the definitions proposed by lexicographers who also studied ethics and morality, such as Ibn Miskawayh (d. AH 421). However, the Academy has not discussed the inconsistencies in this definition. Abu Al-Baqa’ Al-Kafawi offers a similar definition: “Moral character is a set of innate personal traits, such as gallantry and religiosity.”⁽²⁾ Ibn Al-A’rabi also defines moral character in terms of gallantry and religiosity. Other dictionaries, such as *Al-Qāmūs Al-Muḥīṭ* and its revisions in *Tāj Al-‘Arūs* by Al-Zubaydi, define moral character as “innate personality traits with which people are created.” This last definition mirrors a hadith narrated by Aisha when she was asked about the Prophet’s manners.⁽³⁾ She answered: “His manners were the Qur’an.” In other words, the Prophet (PBUH) followed the teachings of the Holy Qur’an to the letter and applied all the moral values and honorable behavior it describes.

The definition I am adopting here is based on the hadith: “Nothing is heavier on the scales of deeds than good morals.”⁽⁴⁾ Accordingly, moral character is the individual’s inner self with its properties and traits, which can be good or evil. Divine reward and punishment are directly related to these properties and traits, rather than to physical features. There are indeed many hadiths that praise good moral character, such as: “The most faithful are those with the best moral character,”⁽⁵⁾ and: “A person can reach the status of those who fast and spend the night praying by having a good moral character.”⁽⁶⁾ It was the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) who said, “I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct.”⁽⁷⁾ There are also several hadiths that condemn bad morals and manners.⁽⁸⁾

Al-Ghazali’s Definition Of Ethics

Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. AH 505) defines moral character as follows: “A person can be described as having good *khalq* “appearance” and good *khuluq* “moral character” if he is pleasant on the inside and outside. Moral character is a set of well-established personality traits that lead to actions without thinking or planning. If a person has a good moral character, he behaves in ways that are

(1) *Al-Mu’jam Al-Wasīṭ* (1/252)

(2) See *Al-Kullīyyāt* by Al-Kafawī (1/252).

(3) Narrated via Aisha by Muslim in his section of praying while traveling (746) and Ahmed (24601).

(4) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda’ by Ahmed (27496), Abu Dawud in *Al-Adab* (4799), and Al-Tirmidhi (2003).

(5) Narrated via Aisha by Ahmed (24677) and Al-Tirmidhi.

(6) Narrated via Aisha by Ahmed (25013), Abu Dawud (4798), and Ibn Hibban (480).

(7) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8952), Al-Bukhari, Al-Hakim (2/613), and Al-Albani in *Al-Sahīḥa* 45).

(8) See Al-Zubaydi, *Tāj Al-‘arūs min Jawāhir Al-Qāmūs*.

lauded both by common sense and religion. Conversely, if a person has a bad moral character, he behaves in ways that are condemned by common sense and religion.” Moral character is about well-established personal traits, because someone who acts generously on a whim or for ulterior goals cannot be described as genuinely generous. For a person to be described as such, he needs to act generously consistently. Similarly, a person who struggles to remain silent when provoked cannot be described as patient; patience has to be natural, consistent, and effortless. It is important here to distinguish moral character from moral acts; a person can be generous without actually acting as such, say for example he has no money to give to charity. Conversely, a person who has the poor moral quality of stinginess might act generously out of hypocrisy or because he has a hidden agenda,⁽¹⁾ as described by Al-Mutanabbi (d. AH 354):

Moral character tells who a lad may be.

Is it generosity, or a pretense we see?

Professor Draz's Definition Of Ethics

Dr. Draz takes a critical approach to the definitions listed above, particularly the idea that moral character is a property of the inner self. He argues that “the inner self has various abilities and functions, such as the ability to perceive, think, imagine, and remember, among others. If all these abilities and traits lead to involuntary actions, can we call them moral traits? The answer is: Of course not.” In other words, Dr. Draz makes it clear that the previous definitions are ambiguous and they need to be further delimited. Dr. Draz's question is valid. We need to make it clear that the inner self is much more than just moral traits. The inner self involves intellectual and emotional components in addition to moral traits, which have to do with human will and intentions. Moreover, unlike the other aspects of the inner self, moral traits trigger willful acts, which can be judged as good or evil, based on moral decisions and choices. Consequently, we can revise our definition of moral character as a set of well-established willful powers that trigger good or evil choices.

This revised definition distinguishes moral traits from other inner self properties and abilities. For example, intellectual abilities are independent of moral decisions; having a strong memory, good aesthetic taste, vivid imagination, or sharp intelligence does not affect moral decisions. Also, having these properties, or the lack thereof, does not determine whether a person has a good moral character or not.⁽²⁾ Besides, there are many willful acts that cannot be judged from

(1) See *The Revival of Religious Sciences* (1/914).

(2) It is true, however, that intellectual abilities can be intentionally used for good or evil ends. This is a choice that is guided by moral character and judged by moral standards.

a moral standpoint; therefore, the question of their morality does not arise. The same applies to artistic and aesthetic willful acts, such as expressing oneself eloquently. While artistic expressions can be judged as good or bad from an aesthetic perspective, they cannot be judged as good or evil. For example, a person who expresses himself poorly cannot be described as evil or sinful.

Finally, it is important to note that observable behavior is different from moral character; behavior is actions motivated by moral character. For an action to be a true indication of moral character, it needs to meet two criteria. The first is to recur in a consistent pattern; therefore, moral character cannot be judged by individual actions, but by repeated actions of the same nature. The second criterion is being a self-motivated willful action. In other words, one's moral character should not be judged based on actions that might be motivated by fear, shyness, social pressure, or other external factors. For example, a poor person might not have money to spend even though he has the moral trait of generosity; we cannot judge such a person to be miserly. Another example is a gluttonous person who has nothing to eat; we cannot judge this person to be virtuous. In short, we should refrain from issuing judgments about people's moral characters unless we have sufficient evidence.⁽¹⁾

Types Of Ethics

There are two types of ethics: innate and acquired. The former type is part of the individual's personality he is born with. Support for this dichotomy comes from the following hadith as narrated by Zari' Ibn Amir or Amr Al-Abdiy Al-Araabi when they visited Medina in the Abd Al-Qays's delegation: "When we arrived in Medina, we dismounted from our camels and hurried to meet the Prophet (PBUH) and kiss his hands and feet. Al-Mundhir Al-Ashaj, however, stayed behind. He went through his bundle, got out a nice outfit, and put it on. When he approached the Prophet, the Prophet said to him, "You have two traits that Allah likes: patience and forbearance." Al-Mundhir asked: "Is it me who chooses to act this way, or this is how Allah has created me?" The Prophet answered: "It is Allah who endowed you with them." Al-Mundhir responded: "Thank Allah who endowed me with two traits He and His Prophet like."⁽²⁾

Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salaam's View On Ethics

Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salaam (d. AH 660), who was the most prominent Islamic scholar of his time, takes a similar approach to ethics. He treats moral character

(1) See Draz (1953), *The Principles of Moral Ethics*. Al-Maṭba'a Al-ʿālamīyya, Pages 4-6.

(2) Narrated by Al-Tabarani (5/275) and Abu Dawud (5225), while Al-Arnaout asserted its soundness and attributed it to a different source.

as innate instincts that deter people from engaging in questionable behavior and pushes them to abide by virtues. He asserts that “Anyone who realizes the nature and status of this life and the afterlife is driven by his innate nature to seek the best ethics and steer away from the evil ones. Allah has created most people with a moral compass that shows them the path of good ethics and discourages from the evil ones. This helps them in their lives, especially during periods where no Prophets are present.” He also describes four types of morals:

(a) Honorable traits: these are moral values which motivate people to abide by Allah’s laws. Those who follow this path are successful in life, and those who do not are corrupted. For example, shyness is a moral trait that promotes virtue and discourages sin, while generosity is a good trait that helps build up the earth and sow the seeds of success in the afterlife. Jealousy is also a good moral trait that helps prevent adultery, while courage in the fight to support religion is another virtue that helps protect against tyrants and the enemies of religion. Mercifulness and tenderness are moral traits that encourage people to help the weak, the poor, the sick, and the needy. Other moral traits in this category include patience, kindness, and sympathy.

(b) Evil traits: These are immoral traits that afflict some people. They motivate people to do evil and sinful deeds and to stay away from doing good deeds. If people resist their own evil tendencies, they are rewarded in this world and the afterlife, but if they fall prey to them, they suffer the consequences.

(c) Desires that can be beneficial in this world, the afterlife, or both: These are basic instincts and desires that should be fulfilled within the realm of religion.

(d) Desires that are harmful in this world, the afterlife, or both: These are sinful actions, such as not fulfilling one’s religious duties or committing forbidden acts.

Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salaam posits a fifth category for actions that we cannot classify, but these are a small minority compared to those we recognize as good or evil. In this regard, he argues that “if jurisprudence and religious scholarship show that such actions are dutiful, people are highly encouraged to comply.”⁽¹⁾ He also clarifies the issue of responsibility, asserting that “everyone who is endowed with good moral traits is rewarded for his actions that stem from them. People are not rewarded just for having good moral traits, but for acting accordingly, because they do not choose to have such traits as protectiveness, virtuosity, generosity, and patience.” Conversely, he also states that “everyone who has innate immoral traits is not to be punished for having such traits, because this is not their doing. Rather, they are punished for acting on such traits as stinginess, arrogance, rudeness, and

(1) Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salaam, *Qawā'id Al-Ahkām fī Islāh Al-Anām*, (1/164-165).

the like.”⁽¹⁾ In summary, according to Ibn Abd Al-Salaam’s view, people are not responsible for the personality traits Allah has given them, but they are responsible for their own choices and actions.

Imam Ibn Al-Qayyim Al-Juziyya (d. AH 751) adopts a similar approach, but focuses on the distinction between innate and acquired moral traits.⁽²⁾ This confirms the view that innate traits are more powerful than acquired ones, unless acquired traits are applied regularly to the point where they become as well-established as innate ones. After all, people’s behavior is highly affected by their habits.

Some moral traits can be acquired by interacting with people who have such traits. One would observe a trait he likes, force himself to behave according to this desired trait, and eventually it becomes second nature. For example, one can act virtuously until they become virtuous, or act patiently until trained to be truly patient. Of course, this training requires perseverance. The Holy Qur’an gives us the example of how people can train birds and dogs for hunting: “Say, ‘Lawful for you are [all] good foods and [game caught by] what you have trained of hunting animals which you train as Allah has taught you’ ” (5:4). If animals can be trained, people can definitely be well trained, for they are more capable of learning.

In the same vein, Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani (d. AH 502) warns his readers to be careful about the company they keep because “company makes bad people good, and the reverse is also true. A wise man once said that if you spend a lot of time with a good person, you get some of his blessings, for the company of people close to Allah saves you from hardships. This applies to everyone, even animals, as in the case of the dog in the story of the young men in the cave: “while their dog stretched his forelegs at the entrance” (Holy Qur’an, 28:18). People acquire the moral traits of those around them, not only through interaction, but even by looking at them. Looking at people who are constantly sad or happy generates the same feelings in those around them. This is true even for animals and plants. For example, a disobedient camel becomes gentle with regular interactions with gentle camels, and vice versa, whereas a healthy plant might wilt if left with wilted plants. Farmers know that well, and this is why they take away dead animals from their fields to make sure their crops will be healthy. Just like other living creatures, humans are also affected by the environment around them.”⁽³⁾

Al-Ghazali’s View On The Possibility Of Changing Moral Character

It has been erroneously claimed that moral character is not amenable to change, just like physical features. If that was true, people would not be advised to strive

(1) Ibid (1/208).

(2) *Madārij Al-Sālikīnī* (3/315)

(3) Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani, *Al-Dharfā ilā Makārim Al-Sharfā*. Dar Al-Salaam, 258-259.

to improve their moral character, and all the moral wisdom and teachings in the world would be an exercise in futility. Deeds are indeed the outcomes of moral character, but moral character can be changed. How can anyone deny that human behavior can be modified and improved? Animals can learn to behave better, and surely humans can too. Dogs and horses can be trained to be gentle, and people too.”⁽¹⁾

Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya (d. AH 751) makes it unequivocally clear that “moral traits can be acquired through practice and training until they become second nature.”⁽²⁾

Abu Said Al-Kudri narrates that a group of Ansars asked the Prophet (PBUH) for charity, and he obliged. Then, they kept asking again and again until he had nothing left to give. He said to them: “If I have something, I will not keep it from you. However, Allah gives to those who act with dignity so that they do not need to ask for charity, and He gives patience to those who act patiently. Patience is the greatest thing that can be given.”⁽³⁾

The Impact Of Genetics And Environment On Human Ethics

Philosophers and scholars agree that hereditary and environmental factors play a significant role in shaping moral character, but it is not immediately clear how and to what extent each category of factors influences its development. As a starting point, we need to acknowledge that heredity applies to humans in the same fashion as it does to animals and plants. This is why, for example, we see people having physical features, such as height, skin and hair color, and other such features, that resemble those of their parents, uncles, and grandparents. People have been aware of these patterns since ancient times, especially when it comes to making decisions about marriage. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Choose wisely for your progeny, for veins run deep.”⁽⁴⁾ The phrase “veins run deep” is a metaphor describing how inherited features go back generations. We see the same recognition as a recurring theme in Classical Arabic poetry, such as the works of Abu Al-Fadl Abbas Ibn Al-Faraj Al-Riyashi who writes:

My first act of love to you was my choice

Of the heiress of honor whose grace we rejoice.

(1) Al-Ghazali, *Mizān Al-ʿamāl*, 81.

(2) Ibn Qayyim Al-Jawziyya, *Madārij Al-Sālikin*, (3/315).

(3) Narrated via Abu Said Al-Kudri by Al-Bukhari (1469) and Muslim (1053) in their respective sections on Zakat.

(4) Narrated via Aisha by Ibn Majah (1968), Al-Darqutni (3788), both in their sections on marriage, and edited by Al-Albani in Ibn Majah's *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1602).

Most parents pride themselves on passing on their honor, truthfulness, and glory to their children, whereas others pass on bad moral qualities to their children. This is why we find the latter to be lacking in such good qualities as generosity, courage, protectiveness, and mercifulness, among others. Just as people pass on their own good qualities to their offspring, they can also pass on their own evil traits. Hence caution is advised when choosing spouses to avoid mixing family lines with bad morals.

Conversely, environmental factors can have undeniable social and psychological effects on moral character, in the same way they affect health. Educators, parents, and scholars fully recognize this fact. This is why we see social, religious, legal, and educational institutions and organizations working diligently to reduce the negative effects of heredity and to help people develop good moral qualities. There is clear evidence for this idea in the Holy Qur'an: "The Bedouins are stronger in disbelief and hypocrisy and more likely not to know the limits of what [laws] Allah has revealed to His Messenger" (8:97). This verse indicates that the harsh geographic environment where the Bedouins live has shaped their culture, and as a result, they are less likely to appreciate or follow Allah's word than others. However, we cannot make any sweeping generalizations here, as the Holy Qur'an also states: "But among the Bedouins are some who believe in Allah and the Last Day and consider what they spend as means of nearness to Allah and of [obtaining] invocations of the Messenger" (9:99). In other words, environmental factors have a significant influence on moral character, but they are not the only factors at play. The Prophet (PBUH) says in a hadith narrated by Abu Hurayrah that "Everyone is born with sound instincts, but parents make their children Jewish, Christian, or worshippers of fire." Good moral character is this pure instinct that is referred as *fitrah* in the verse: "[Adhere to] the *fitrah* of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 30:30). As we can see, Islamic texts recognize both heredity and the environment as critical factors that contribute to the shaping of moral character. We should maintain a balance between these two types of factors and utilize them for the benefit of individuals, the community, the Ummah, and humanity.

Islam

Thus far, our discussion has been focused on ethics and the various definitions of moral character, but what do we mean by "Islam?" It is very important to agree on a clear definition of Islam in order to discuss ethics in Islam. Everyone seems to have an idea about Islam. Usually, it is an idea that has developed as part of socialization through the community or educational institutes. However, these definitions vary in ways that are sometimes quite significant. When we talk of Islam in this book, we mean the one great religion that Allah has sent to His people

via His messengers and scriptures. It is a purely monotheistic religion with unified ways of worshipping. It is a religion based on sound moral values, both divine and humanistic, and divine commandments that establish justice among people and guide them to the straight path. It is the universal religion that Allah has sent to all people alike.

In the Holy Qur'an, all the prophets declare their religion to be Islam. For example, Noah says: "And if you turn away [from my advice], then no payment have I asked of you. My reward is only from Allah, and I have been commanded to be one of the Muslims" (10:72). Abraham and his son Ismail reiterate the same pronouncement while rebuilding the Ka'ba: "Our Lord, make us Muslims [in submission] to You and from our descendants a Muslim nation [in submission] to You" (Holy Qur'an, 2:128). Abraham declared himself a Muslim in response to Allah's command: "When his Lord said to him, 'Submit!' he said 'I have submitted [in Islam] to the Lord of the worlds' (Holy Qur'an, 2:131). It was also Abraham's advice to his children when he approached death: "And Abraham instructed his sons [to do the same] and [so did] Jacob, [saying], 'Oh my sons, indeed Allah has chosen for you this religion, so do not die except as Muslims.'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:132). It was Joseph's prayer: "Creator of the heavens and earth, You are my protector in this world and in the Hereafter. Cause me to die a Muslim and join me with the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 12:101). Allah describes the message of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in various contexts: "This day, I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion" (Holy Qur'an, 5:3), "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (Holy Qur'an, 3:19), and "whoever desires a religion other than Islam - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among those who have lost" (Holy Qur'an, 3:85).

Islam is the one religion of Allah who sent his prophets and messengers to warn people and to guide them to the right path, while Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), as Allah says, is "the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets" (Holy Qur'an, 33:40). Thus, the message sent down to Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) has served to complete the series of revelations, as described in the hadith: "The prophets before me and I are like a house. It was built in stages, but one brick was left out. People would see the house and marvel how one brick was missing. I am that brick, and I have come to be the seal of prophets."⁽¹⁾

The hadith "I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct"⁽²⁾ indicates

(1) Narrated via Jabir by Muslim (2287) and Ahmed (14888).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8952), verified and included in the *Ṣaḥīḥs*, such as Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fi Ḥusn Al-Khuluq* (273) and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārīkh Al-Mutaqaddimīn* (2/613), except for Mohammed Ibn Ajlan. It was also narrated in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with an addition, and supported by Al-Dhahabi, and classified by Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (25).

that the previous prophets were sent to their respective peoples with messages that suited the people's capacity in those times. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), however, was sent at a time when humanity matured and developed to a point where it could realize humanity's potential to the fullest. This is why his main miracle, the Holy Qur'an, is of an intellectual nature. Allah challenged the Arabs, who were masters of eloquence and poetry, to come up with a similar text, but they failed. He then challenged them to produce ten chapters only, then just one, and they still failed. True are Allah's words when he addresses the Prophet (PBUH): "Say, 'If mankind and the jinn gathered in order to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it, even if they were to each other assistants' " (Holy Qur'an, 17:88). In another context Allah says: "And if you are in doubt about what We have sent down upon Our Servant [Mohammed], then produce a surah the like thereof and call upon your witnesses other than Allah, if you should be truthful. But if you do not - and you will not - then fear the Fire, whose fuel is people and stones, prepared for the disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 2:23-24).

The Holy Qur'an is the greatest of all miracles. Previous prophets challenged people with miracles of a physical nature, such as Moses's staff and his white hand and Jesus's bringing back the dead and healing the leper. The miracle of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is bringing people out of the darkness and into the light, all with Allah's permission. It is the miracle of reviving minds, softening hardened hearts, and developing a new way of thinking for humanity. This is indeed very different from performing miraculous acts, which he also did but never used as a challenge. Egyptian poet Ahmed Shawqi writes in this regard:

I was sent at a time of utter chaos when people did suffer

Everywhere you looked, you saw an idol worshipping another.

Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) message is unique in two regards. Unlike the messages of previous prophets, his is universal. It does not address a particular people or ethnicity. Rather, it is meant for all people across the world, as Allah says: "Say, [Oh Muhammad], 'Oh mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all' " (Holy Qur'an, 7:158) and "We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 21:107). It is a message of mercy to all mankind: "We have not sent you except comprehensively to mankind as a bringer of good tidings and to warn" (Holy Qur'an, 34:28). The Holy Qur'an itself is described as a reminder: "It is but a reminder to the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 38:87). These are all recurrent themes in various chapters of the Holy Qur'an. Interestingly, all the chapters that declare the universal nature of Islam were revealed in Mecca in the early years of Islam. The other unique aspect of Prophet Mohammed's (PBUH) message is that it is the last one: "but [Mohammed is] the Messenger of Allah and last of the prophets" (Holy Qur'an, 33:40). Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is the only prophet to make such a statement. In fact, previous prophets told proph-

ecies about other prophets yet to come. Besides, it has been more than 14 centuries and we have not heard a credible person claiming to be a prophet.

The Islam we are calling for has a constitution protected by Allah, namely the Holy Qur'an. The Sunnah is what helps us understand the Holy Qur'an, which in turn helps protect the Sunnah. Moreover, the Ummah has taken unprecedented measures to document, preserve, and explain the Sunnah. Islam is also a comprehensive message that includes fundamental articles of faith, acts of worship that help people get close to Allah, and laws that maintain justice among people, be it at the level of the individual, the family, the community, the state, the Ummah, and humanity in general. Finally, the message includes the morals that Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was sent to perfect, as we will discuss in this book.

Theoretical And Practical Ethics

According to Professor Draz: "People can ignore some scientific facts for years. In fact, they might not even realize that they do not know them. Morality, however, cannot be ignored, not even for the blink of an eye. This is because morality is a practical necessity. Every action we make, or not make; every time we speak, or decide not to; we make a conscious decision: Should we do this or not? We make such moral decisions all the time, and we have to make them promptly; otherwise it would be too late. We are also responsible for the consequences of these decisions, and we need to be able to justify them according to our moral principles. However, we sometimes make bad decisions or apply the wrong principles." This is why we all need to have a moral code present in our mind at all times to help us make the right decisions. This code is what we call "ethics".

Practical ethics is the study of the good moral characteristics everyone should have, such as faithfulness, truthfulness, virtuosity, courage, justice, and the like. This field of study is directly related to daily life, for it is our duty to uphold these moral values and adhere to them. All nations, ancient and modern, have studied and promoted these values using whatever means available to them, such as academic research, teaching, and even folk tales. Theoretical ethics, or moral philosophy, on the other hand, is the study of the principles underlying moral responsibility. For example, it investigates the nature of abstract moral concepts, e.g. absolute truth and virtue, the sources of moral obligation, and the goals of morality. Theoretical and applied ethics are complementary subfields: theoretical ethics focuses, for example, on the nature of truth as an abstract concept, whereas applied/practical ethics focuses on the actions motivated by this moral value. The relation between these two subfields of ethics is the same as the relation between jurisprudence and the foundations of jurisprudence; the former studies the practical applications of law, whereas the latter, which is reserved for academics and

specialists, studies the theoretical aspects of jurisprudence.

Ethics is a very complicated subject, and we can appreciate this by looking at the multitude of moral obligations we have to meet, even though they sometimes conflict with each other. While we need to comply with our moral obligations, we also need to fulfill our biological, social, and spiritual needs. In other words, we need to maintain a balance between ethics and these needs. Understanding how moral decisions are made helps us maintain this balance in our lives as advised by the Prophet (PBUH): “Allah has rights to you, your body has rights to you, your spouse has rights to you, and your guest has rights to you. Fulfill your duties to all of them.”⁽¹⁾ Muslim societies, and the whole world, need the study of ethics, both theoretical and practical, because fulfilling moral obligations and avoiding poor moral judgments are necessary for social well-being, as Ahmad Shawqi says:

Nations last as long as their morals do

If morals are gone, so nations too.

And:

If people's morals fail to materialize

Mourn them and wail over their demise.

Theoretical ethics, or moral philosophy, is critical for the development of societies, as it allows scholars and specialists to analyze the moral values in their societies, how they relate to each other, and the methods of evaluating moral judgments. Moral philosophy is also the academic field that allows scholars to understand and appreciate the unique nature of Islamic ethics. In his discussion of the importance of moral philosophy, Mohammed Gad Al-Mawla explains: “It is common sense for medical sciences to be in high demand when diseases spread; they save lives. The same goes for moral philosophy: as moral decay spreads widely, moral philosophy becomes more necessary for it is medicine to humanity. While people do need knowledge, they need morals even more, because injustice and criminality stem from the lack of morals, rather than the lack of knowledge.”⁽²⁾

Sources Of Theoretical And Practical Islamic Ethics

Islamic ethics are derived from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, as well as the teachings and histories of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions. The cultural traditions and social norms of Islamic societies can contribute to the development

(1) Narrated via Abu Juhayfa by Al-Bukhari on fasting (1968) and Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on asceticism (2413).

(2) Mohammed Gad Al-Mawla, *Al-Khuluq Al-Kāmil*, 3-4.

of the Islamic moral character, as long as they do not conflict with Shari'a. Mohammed Abdullah Draz lists four sources of moral obligation in his doctoral dissertation: the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, the consensus of Islamic scholars, and logical deduction. He elaborates that "All four sources of moral obligation go back to one source: Allah, from whom we have received divine commandments regarding what to do and what not to do, what is permitted and what is forbidden, and what is desired and what is not. The Holy Qur'an serves as the main source, while the other sources gain their legitimacy from the Holy Qur'an." While I agree with Dr. Draz's main argument, I see that the Holy Qur'an is the source of legitimacy for additional secondary sources of moral obligation, such as social norms and the interest in public wellbeing.

The Holy Qur'an, which is the primary source of moral obligation in Islam, is the foundation for Islamic jurisprudence and moral judgment. We see several passages in the text of the Holy Qur'an addressing the hearts and minds of people on issues of morality. Some such passages focus on the principles and foundations of morality, while others address particular issues. This observation has motivated some scholars to argue that the Holy Qur'an is a moral miracle which provides a balanced and comprehensive approach to morality. This is, of course, in addition to the other miraculous aspects of the text. The Sunnah provides detailed explanations of the Holy Qur'anic texts on morality. Thus, Islam, as a universal message represented in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah together, provides a comprehensive guide to ethics, both practical and theoretical, at the individual and social levels. This is why we have been ordered to hold on to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah and to abide by their teachings, as in the hadith: "I have left two things with you that if you hold on to, you will never go astray. These are Allah's Book and my Sunnah. These two will never be separated until they approach the basin in heaven."⁽¹⁾ We see the same commandment in another hadith: "The Prophet (PBUH) gave an eloquent sermon one day after the early morning prayer that moved our hearts and made our eyes flow with tears. One of us said: 'Oh Messenger of Allah, it is as if this is a farewell sermon. What advice do you have for us?' The Prophet said: 'I advise you to fear Allah and to listen to and obey (your leaders) even if an Abyssinian slave were to rule over you, for whomsoever lives amongst you after me will see many differences. Beware of newly invented matters, for they are misguidance. Whoever reaches that time amongst you should follow my Sunnah and the Sunnah of the Rightly Guided Caliphs. Hold on to it as if you are biting on it with your teeth.'⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Darqutni (4606), Al-Hakim (1/93), but it was left out by Al-Dhahabi and corrected by Al-Alnabi (2937).

(2) Narrated via Al-Arbad Ibn Sariyah via Ahmed (sound; 27142), Abu Dawud (sound; 4607), Ibn Majah in his introduction (42), and Al-Albani (40).

Allah has praised the Prophet's (PBUH) moral character in the verse "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (Holy Qur'an, 68:4). The linguistic structure of this verse in Arabic is quite eloquent and effective. It starts with an emphasis particle, translated as *indeed*, followed with the second person singular pronoun, which makes the statement very specific to the Prophet. The predicate in this sentence is the phrase "of great morals", where the preposition "of" is the translation of the Arabic على "on," which is also prefixed with an emphasis particle. The choice of the Arabic preposition for "on" profiles a top-down relation, suggesting control and higher status. This verse summarizes the Prophet's moral characteristics, which include virtue, generosity, courage, faithfulness, patience, forgivingness, and honesty, which no other human ever had to the same degree as He did. All these moral values were inherent to the Prophet (PBUH), whose morals were also well-balanced, which is no surprise, for Allah had blessed him with a unique moral character, as described in Sharaf Al-Deen Al-Busayri's poem:

Who was vested with beauty and disguised by pleasant temperament.

He is like a blooming flower in its freshness and the full moon in splendor.

Abu Abdallah Al-Jadali narrated that he once asked Aisha (May Allah Be Pleased With Her): "What was the Prophet like with his family? She said: 'He never uttered obscenities or listened to them, and he never raised his voice in the markets. He would not return an evil with an evil. Rather, he was pardoning and forgiving'."⁽¹⁾ Sa'd Ibn Hashim Ibn Amir narrates: "Mother of the Faithful (addressing Aisha), tell me about the character of the Messenger of Allah. She asked: 'Do you not recite the Holy Qur'an? The character of the Messenger was the Holy Qur'an'."⁽²⁾ In other words, the Prophet's moral character mirrored the teachings of the Holy Qur'an. He abided by its moral directives, for every immoral act is described, condemned, and forbidden in the Holy Qur'an. The same applies for good moral acts; the Holy Qur'an lists them, praises them, and encourages people to abide by them. Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salam (d. AH 660) elaborates on this issue by stating that "the Prophet's (PBUH) manners were a reflection of the Holy Qur'an, which orders people to follow his example through the Sunnah."⁽³⁾

Al-Shatibi (d. AH 790), who was a leading jurisprudence scholar, further elaborates that "When the Prophet's heart and mind were filled with the light of righteousness that materialized in his knowledge and actions, he became the beacon of light for this Ummah and its greatest teacher. Allah has blessed him, of all His creation, with this inherent light, not because of his intellectual abilities or his lineage, but because he was chosen for the revelations, and his moral

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 25990), and Al-Timidhi (sound; 2016).

(2) Narrated by Muslim (746), Ahmed (24269), and Abu Dawud (1342).

(3) *Qawā'id Al-Ahkām fī Iṣlāḥ Al-Anām*, (1/209).

character was shaped accordingly: ‘And indeed, you are of a great moral character’” (Holy Qur’an, 68:4). In summary, the moral character of the Prophet (PBUH) was the Holy Qur’an, because the revelation has taken over his constitution, so much so that his knowledge and actions came according to the revelation. In other words, the power of the revelation came to an accepting recipient, as the Prophet (PBUH) was obedient as he heeded the call and submitted to the power of Allah. This particular moral trait was one of the most compelling pieces of evidence for his truthfulness; the Holy Qur’an came with moral directives in the form of commandments regarding what people should and should not do, and he was the first to comply, thus being the true leader of the caravan of the faithful.”⁽¹⁾

The Higher Objective Of The Prophet’s Messengership

The Holy Qur’an sums up the purpose behind the Prophet’s (PBUH) message as follows: “And We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds” (21:107), which he reiterates in a hadith as: “I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct,”⁽²⁾ and in another hadith: “I have been sent only as a mercy.”⁽³⁾ This moral character is further explained in the Holy Qur’an: “[Oh Mohammed], if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you” (3:159). In fact, we see several verses indicating that Allah blessed the Prophet (PBUH) in a way that separated him from the rest of His creation, as in: “Say, ‘Indeed, [all] bounty is in the hand of Allah - He grants it to whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Wise. He selects for His mercy whom He wills. And Allah is the possessor of great bounty’” (3:73-74). We also see Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) described as one of the five resilient prophets who were able to be patient despite injustice and cruelty: “So be patient, [Oh Mohammed], as were those of determination among the messengers and do not be impatient for them” (Holy Qur’an, 46:35). These five prophets are the ones mentioned in the following verse: “He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [Oh Mohammed], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein” (Holy Qur’an, 42:13), and “And [mention, Oh Mohammed], when We took from the prophets their covenant and from you and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus, the son of Mary; and We took from them a solemn covenant” (Holy Qur’an, 33:7).

(1) *Al-F'tīṣām*, Al-Shatibi, 433-434.

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed as (sound; 8952), Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fi Ḥusn Al-Khuluq* (273) and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārīkh Al-Mutaqaddimīn*, and Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 45).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Hakim (corrected; 1/35) and Al-Albani (corrected; 490).

Major Duties Of The Messenger (PBUH)

Allah has specified the duties of His messenger in the Holy Qur'an: "Just as We have sent among you a messenger from yourselves reciting to you Our verses and purifying you and teaching you the Book and wisdom, and teaching you that which you did not know" (2:151)⁽¹⁾. In this verse, Allah addresses people to let them know that He has sent His messenger to fulfill specific duties, namely guiding them to the straight path, teaching them the true religion, and taking them out of the darkness and into the light. These duties are achieved by (a) reciting Allah's words, thus delivering the message and holding people responsible before Allah, (b) purifying people by ridding them of the evils of ignorance and helping them develop their moral character by believing in the one Allah, science, and human dignity, which contrasts with their old ways of polytheism, myths, ignorance, and injustice; and (c) teaching people the Book and wisdom. The Book in this context is the revelation, which is the Holy Qur'an that Allah sent down from Heavens to the Prophet (PBUH) to call for what is good, forbid what is evil, and establish justice on earth. The Prophet (PBUH) was entrusted with teaching two types of wisdom: practical wisdom and divine wisdom. Divine wisdom is knowledge of the underlying truths about articles of faith, such as creation, divine commandments, and fate. Practical wisdom, conversely, is the knowledge that helps people's minds and hearts become enlightened through the pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty. Another duty of the Prophet (PBUH) is to teach people what they did not know, which is the teachings of religion, including creed, acts of worship, moral values, manners, and virtues. This duty also involves paving the way for people to seek what they need to succeed in this life and in the afterlife.

The Holy Qur'an also includes verses that describe additional duties of the Prophet (PBUH). For example, in the story of Abraham and his son Ismail, they pray for their descendants: "Our Lord, and send among them a messenger from themselves who will recite to them Your verses and teach them the Book and wisdom and purify them. Indeed, You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 2:129). This verse lists all the duties we discussed above. We see the same theme recurring in other verses, such as: "Certainly did Allah confer [great] favor upon the believers when He sent among them a Messenger from themselves, reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they had been before in manifest error" (Holy Qur'an, 3:164), and: "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error - And [to] others of them who have not yet joined them. And He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. That is the

(1) See Chapter 4: The Methods of Applying Islamic Ethics.

bounty of Allah, which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty” (Holy Qur’an, 62, 2-4). These verses clearly state that the Prophet’s (PBUH) duty is not just to deliver a message; he was sent to teach people Allah’s Book and to purify them after years of darkness that took over their lives.

The Prophet has also served as a moral role model as I will discuss in the chapter on the methodology of achieving Islam’s moral goals. It is sufficient here to list some comments by leading scholars on the topic. For example, Sheikh Mustafa Sabri Al-Tuqadi (d. AH 1373), who was the last leading scholar of the Ottoman Empire, comments that “because Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was the last of the prophets, it was necessary for him to embody the best of moral characters, and for these moral traits to be well documented and made available to the Ummah until the end of the world.”⁽¹⁾ The late Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghazali once told of a Muslim scholar who was asked if he had read Aristotle’s book on moral ethics. He answered: “No, but I read Mohammed’s book on moral ethics. We found what Aristotle and other philosophers imagined to be a reality in Mohammed’s life and teachings.”⁽²⁾

The Prophet’s Moral Character As Evidence Of His Prophethood

Anyone who studies the moral character of the Prophet (PBUH) as described in the Sunnah would see how he educated his companions and how they loved Him. His interactions with his companions are testimonies to his prophethood. It was his honesty, truthfulness, and impeccable moral character that made people believe and follow him. Ibn Hazm comments on this argument when he writes: “Prophet Mohammad’s (PBUH) personal history is enough for anyone to believe that he was truly a prophet, even if he did not perform miracles.” Al-Taftazani attributes the Prophet’s moral character to his prophethood.⁽³⁾ Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali makes a similar argument: “It is impossible for anyone who studies the Prophet’s personal history to believe that a regular person is capable of behaving in such ways out of human nature alone. The way he interacted with different types of people and his efforts to guide and lead them had to be divinely inspired. His ability to respond to difficult questions and to explain jurisprudence was something that scholars and intellectuals could not fathom. Anyone who studies the prophet’s life cannot even consider the possibility that he was a liar or a fraud. In fact, Bedouins would see him and swear to Allah: “This cannot be the face of someone who lies.” They would swear to his truthfulness and honesty just by seeing him, let alone seeing him interact with people. Only a misguided person

(1) Mustafa Sabri, *Mawqif Al-‘aql wal-‘ilm wal-‘ālam min Rab Al-‘ālamīn wa-‘Ibādih Al-Mursalīn*, (4/58).

(2) Mohammed Al-Ghazali, *Khuluq Al-Muslim* (5-6).

(3) *Al-Fayṣal fī al-Mīlāl wal-Ahwā’ wal-Niḥāl* (2/37).

would insist on questioning the truthfulness of the Prophet's message after studying about his moral character, miracles, and the spread of his message across the world and over the centuries."⁽¹⁾

Al-Manfalouti takes a similar stand, as he writes: "Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) did not need to walk on water or fly in the air to prove that he was a prophet. His manners and moral behavior, which were nothing known to humanity, were sufficient to prove that he was a messenger from Allah. It was his knowledge, patience, humility, truthfulness, and faithfulness that impressed the Arabs more than any of his miracles, such as the splitting of the moon, the walking trees, the softening stone, or the pebbles praying with him. While people often disbelieved miracles as the work of magicians, they did not doubt his morals. Without his morals and manners, no miracle could have had any effect. This is what Allah says in the Holy Qur'an, "[Oh Mohammed], if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you."

Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khidr of Al-Azhar University adds: "If you study the Prophet's biography closely, you will see that every stage of his life was a miracle in its own right. If you can compare the Prophet's moral character to that of the greatest man in history books, you would see the difference. It is the difference between human character when it reaches the limits of humanity either through intelligence or self-discipline and human character that is endowed with divine knowledge and wisdom."⁽²⁾

Ali Al-Tantawi provides a similar argument in his book *Hudā wa-Nūr*: "The Prophet's life in its entirety was a miracle, and none of the great people in history had a life that was anywhere close to that of the Prophet's. We see greatness in all aspects of his life, such as his physical fitness and sportsmanship; no victory made him arrogant or complacent, and no defeat angered or weakened him. In the thickest of the battles, he would stand firm, so much so that his companions would hide behind him for protection. Yet, he was humble with the poor and the weak, and he would stand up for the elderly and the widows. He was honest in conveying Allah's message, even the verses that talk of his errors or blame him. He always kept his word and honored every oath, no matter how difficult that was. We see these moral characteristics both in his interpersonal interactions and in the way he managed the state. It was he who established eating etiquette and promoted the principles of cleanliness and personal hygiene. He was the teacher and the role model, living with his companions and guiding them. He listened to them and sought their advice. When he sat with his companions, nobody could

(1) *Sharḥ Al-Maqāṣid*, (2/133).

(2) *The Complete Works of Al-Manfalouti*, 131-133.

identify him. Newcomers would come to a group of people and ask which one was Mohammed.”⁽¹⁾

The Prophet's Hadiths On Acquiring Good Moral Character

In this context, it is important to present some of the Prophet's hadiths that promote having a good moral character.

Al-Nawwas Ibn Sam'an Al-Ansari reports: “I asked Allah's Messenger, May Peace be upon Him, about virtue and vice. He said: ‘Virtue is a kind moral disposition, and vice is what rankles in your heart and you do not want people to know about’.”⁽²⁾

Abdullah Ibn `Amr reports: “The Prophet never used bad language or liked hearing obscene language. He used to say: ‘The best amongst you are those who have the best manners and moral character’.”⁽³⁾

Abu Tha'laba Al-Khushani reports: “The Prophet, Peace be upon Him, said: ‘Indeed, the most beloved among you to me, and the closest to me on the Day of Judgment, are the best of you in moral character. And indeed, the most disliked among you to me, and the ones furthest from me on the Day of Judgment, are the worst in moral character: the talkative, the arrogant, and ranters’.”

Abu Hurayrah, May Allah be Pleased with Him, reports: “Indeed, among the believers with the most complete faith are the ones with best moral conduct and the most kind to their wives and families’.”⁽⁴⁾

Sahl Ibn Al-Sa'idi reports that he heard the Prophet say: “Allah is generous; He loves generosity and good moral conduct, but He dislikes bad moral conduct.”⁽⁵⁾

In summary, good morals are drawn from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, which serves as a model of how the moral teachings in the Holy Qur'an are applied in real life.

(1) This is a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari (36) via Anas Ibn Malik: “While we were sitting with the Prophet, peace be upon him, a man came riding a camel. He made the camel kneel down and tied it to a post. Then he asked “Which one of you is Mohammed?”

(2) Narrated by Muslim (2553), Ahmed (17631), and Al-Tirmidhi (2389).

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (good; 6735), Al-Tirmidhi (odd but good; 2018), and Ibn Hibban (482), Al-Haythami (8/46), and Al-Mundhiri (3/277).

(4) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 7402) and Al-Tirmidhi (sound; 1162).

(5) Narrated by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Kabir* (6/181) and *Al-Awsat* (2940), Al-Hakim in his chapter on faith (sound; 1/48), Al-Bayhaqi (10/191), Al-Haythami (13687), and Al-Albani (corrected; 1378).

The Teachings Of Earlier Scholars

In addition to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, the teachings of scholars constitute another source of moral obligation. For example, Al-Fadil Ibn Iyad (d. AH 187) argues: "When you interact with people, make sure you keep the company of those with good morals, for their company encourages moral behavior, and their company brings nothing but peace. Conversely, stay away from those with bad moral conduct, for their company encourages evil behavior, and you get nothing from them but pain."⁽¹⁾ Imam Al-Junayd Al-Baghdadi (d. AH 298) says in this regard: "I would rather keep the company of a sinful man with good morals than the company of a religious man with bad morals. Good morals make it easier to deal with sinful people and to like them, whereas bad morals make it hard for people to like and deal with anyone, even religious people."⁽²⁾ Finally, Al-Zahid Al-Muhasibi Al-Basri (d. AH 234) defines good moral character in terms of four traits: being patient when people are mean, not getting angry, smiling in people's faces, and talking only positively.⁽³⁾

(1) Ibn Hibban, *Rawḍat Al-ʿuqalā' wa-Nuzhat Al-Fuḍalā'*, 49.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Abd Al-Fattah Abu Ghudda, *Risālat Al-Mustarshidīn*, 63.

1.2 The Status Of Ethics In Islam

Islam As An Ethical Message

Scholars of Islamic studies traditionally divide the field into four main areas: articles of faith, acts of worship, guidelines for social interaction, which some call jurisprudence, and moral acts. This traditional order might misleadingly suggest that ethics is the least significant aspect of Islam. However, those who have delved deep into the study of the Holy Qur'an, both in letter and spirit, recognize that Islam in its entirety is almost all about ethics morality. In fact, there are those who go as far as calling Islam a "moralistic message". It is no surprise that ethics is a central component of Islam, along with divinity, humanism, and realism, as I discuss in detail in *Introduction To Islamic Jurisprudence*.

Islam strongly encourages people to develop good moral character to the point of direct obligation. It also offers stern warnings against poor moral character with severe punishment in this life and in the afterlife. When Allah honors Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the Holy Qur'an, it is his moral character that Allah praises: "And indeed, you are of a great moral character" (68:4). Moreover, when the Prophet (PBUH) summarizes the objectives of his message, he focuses on ethics: "I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct."⁽¹⁾ What makes ethics the fundamental component of Islam is that it permeates the whole religion as represented in the three other components (articles of faith, acts of worship, and social interactions). In fact, Islam makes ethics the underlying foundation for all human activities, including politics, economics, peace, and even war.

Faith And Ethics

Monotheism is the essence of all Islamic creeds, but Islam adds a moralistic dimension to monotheism by treating it as a form of justice, which is by definition a moral value. By the same token, Islam considers polytheism a form of injustice: "Luqman said to his son while he was instructing him: 'Oh my son, do not associate [anything] with Allah. Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice'" (Holy Qur'an, 31:13). Worshiping any entity along with Allah is considered a form of injustice toward oneself, because it misdirects one's acts of worship. All forms of disbelieving in Allah are considered injustice in Islam: "And the disbelievers - they are the wrongdoers" (Holy Qur'an, 2:254).

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8952), Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fi Husn Al-Khuluq* (273), and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārīkh Al-Mutaqaddimīn* (2/613). It was also included in Muslim's *Saḥīḥ* with an addition, supported by Al-Dhahabi, and classified by Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (25).

Faith, from an Islamic perspective, manifests itself in moral acts, as stated in the following verses from the Holy Qur'an:

"Certainly will the faithful have succeeded: They are those who during their prayer are humbly submissive - And they who turn away from ill speech, and they who are observant of Zakat, and they are those who guard their private parts, except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed - But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors - And they are those who are to their trusts and their promises attentive" (Holy Qur'an, 23:1-8).

The Holy Qur'an defines faith in terms of moral acts as in: "The believers are only those who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts quiver, and when His verses are recited to them, they increase them in faith; and upon their Lord they rely -The ones who establish prayer, and from what We have provided them, they spend" (8:2-4), and "The believers are only these who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful" (49:15). Other verses provide more details, as in: "And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth gently, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace, And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer], And those who say: 'Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering; Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence'. And [there are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever in-between and [justly] moderate - And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the souls Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse - And whoever should do that will be met with punishment" (25: 63-68).

There are also several hadiths that establish the connection between faith and ethics, such as those listed below:

"He who believes in Allah and the Day of Judgment, let him strengthen his family bonds, show hospitality to his guests, do no harm to his neighbors, and speak good or remain silent."⁽¹⁾

"Faith has some 60-odd branches, the highest of which is the statement *there is no god but Allah*, and lowest is clearing harmful things off the road. Modesty is also an article of faith."⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on manners (6138).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (9) and Muslim (35), in their respective chapters on faith.

“An adulterer is not a believer while committing adultery. A thief is not a believer while stealing. Whoever drinks alcohol is not a believer while drinking.”⁽¹⁾

“Faith is the deterrent of murder. No faithful person commits murder.”⁽²⁾ In this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) gives another example of how faith helps uphold moral values. In the Arabic source hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) uses the noun قيد (pronounced *qayd*), which also means a rope used to tie animals down to restrict their movement. Al-Sharif Al-Radi (d. AH 406) explains: “This hadith is a metaphor describing how faith prevents people from committing such a forbidden immoral act. Faith forces people to denounce the acts of Jahiliya, pre-Islamic ignorance, and to abide by good morals. Faith would disallow anyone from acting in such an immoral way in the same fashion that a rope restricts the movement of an animal.”⁽³⁾

Scholars’ Sayings On The Connection Between Faith And Ethics

Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salam, also known as the Sultan of Scholars, writes: “The faith of the faithful deters them from disobeying Allah and committing sins, whereas the immorality of those who are immoral pushes them further down in sin and injustice.”⁽⁴⁾ Ali Al-Tantawi, who was a scholar of jurisprudence and an accomplished literary writer, argues: “Despite the efforts of modern theories of ethics to diversify the sources of moral obligation, there is one fact that is not subject to change: Any moral system built on anything but religious faith is fragile at best. People are innately driven to satisfy their basic needs and to protect themselves. As a result, people tend to do nothing unless they gain something or get pleasure. Suppose a person has nothing but a single dinar he has been saving for his dinner. This person sees a charity box designated for helping orphans. Why would anyone who does not believe in Allah and the Day of Judgment put his dinar in the box and go to bed hungry? Only a faithful person would do so without telling anyone. A faithful person knows that Allah sees him, and that, at the Day of Judgment, he would be given 700 dinars in return. Only faithful people do good deeds regardless of whether others recognize and appreciate these deeds or not. Only faithful people steer away from evil deeds, whether in private or in public. Those who do good deeds to get recognition and to be thanked or rewarded would not do such deeds if there is no reward. By the same token, those who avoid evil deeds out of shame or fear of punishment would commit such deeds if nobody was watching them.”⁽⁵⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (agreed on; 2475) in his chapter on injustice and Muslim in his chapter on faith (57).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Abu-Dawud in his chapter on jihad (2769), Al-Hakim in his chapter on punishment (citing Muslim; 4/352), Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmiʿ* (corrected; 2802).

(3) Al-Sharif Al-Radi, *Al-Majāzāt Al-Nabawiyya* (236).

(4) *Qawā'id Al-Aḥkām fī Islāḥ Al-Anām* (1/103).

(5) Ali Al-Tantawi, *Ta'rif 'Ām bi-Dīn Al-Islām* (145-146).

Islamic Acts Of Worship And Ethics

All acts of worship in Islam, such as praying, giving to *Zakat*, fasting, and going to *Hajj*, have well-defined moral objectives. For example, praying, which Muslims perform five times a day, has a direct influence on moral behavior. Allah says: “Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing” (Holy Qur’an, 25:45). Praying also gives Muslims the power needed to deal with everyday struggles: “Oh you who believe, seek help through patience and prayer” (Holy Qur’an, 2:153). Giving to *zakat* is another act of worship that Allah has associated with morality. Charity is not an income tax to be taken from the rich and redistributed among the poor; it is a means of spiritual purification and an investment: “Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah’s blessings] upon them” (Holy Qur’an, 9:103). Fasting in Islam is a kind of training on curbing desires and breaking from established habits. In other words, fasting helps strengthen piety, which sums up all Islamic ethics morality: “Oh you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you, that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 2:183). The Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca is an exercise in self-purification, devotion, and ridding oneself from the conflicts of life. This is why Muslims have to be in a state of *ihram*, in which they renounce worldly pleasures and achieve inner peace: “*Hajj* is [during] well-known months, so whoever has made *Hajj* obligatory upon himself therein [by entering the state of *ihram*], there is [to be for him] no sexual relations and no sins and no disputes during *Hajj*” (Holy Qur’an, 2:197).

If the above-mentioned acts of worship lose their moral foundation, they fail to serve their purposes and become meaningless. There are several hadiths that support this idea. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) says: “It may be that a person prays at night, but gains nothing from his prayers except staying up late.”⁽¹⁾ He also says: “Whoever does not give up saying and doing falsehoods, Allah is in no need for his abandoning food and drink”⁽²⁾ and “Many people fast, but they get nothing from their fasting but hunger and thirst.”⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8856), Ibn Majah in his chapter on fasting (1690), and Al-Hakim also in his chapter on fasting (citing Al-Bukhari; 1/431), and Al-Dhahabi in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmiʿ* (corrected; 5801).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on fasting (1903), Ahmed (9839), Abu Dawud (2362), Al-Tirmidhi (707), and Ibn Majah (1689).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8856), Ibn Majah in his chapter on fasting (1690), Al-Hakim also in his chapter on fasting (citing Al-Bukhari; 1/431), and Al-Dhahabi in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmiʿ* (corrected; 5801).

Ethics And Economics

Islamic ethics is heavily intertwined with finance and economics, especially in the areas of production, distribution, and consumption.⁽¹⁾ The economy is not an unregulated field where people can do as they please free from moral restrictions, as some economists like to claim. Muslims are not free to engage in production activities if their products are physically, mentally, socially, or emotionally harmful, regardless of the profits. Rather, Muslims are required to abide by Islamic ethics in all their economic activities, whether they involve sales, earnings, investments, or spending. For instance, growing tobacco, cannabis, or other plants of a similar nature might be quite lucrative, but it is clearly forbidden because the final product can be harmful to the consumer.

By the same token, growing grapes for the purpose of making wine is also forbidden despite the economic value of the final product. This is because of the negative effects of consuming alcohol on individuals and society as a whole. In fact, Islam not only prohibits drinking alcohol, but condemns everyone involved in the alcohol economy, including those who produce, promote, transport, sell, buy, or serve alcohol, in addition to those who indirectly benefit from its proceeds. This is in adherence with the hadith: “Allah has cursed all involved in wine: The one who presses it, the one who has it pressed, the one who buys it, the one who sells it, the one who carries it, the one it is carried to, and the one who eats from its proceeds.”⁽²⁾

Gambling is another activity that is prohibited in Islam, even though it is entertaining and potentially lucrative. However, it has dire consequences; it can develop into an addiction, and it can make people rely on chance rather than hard work to earn a living. In addition, gambling generates hatred among gamblers. Gambling can push people into situations where they would rather gamble than provide for their families, and even betray their country to feed their addiction. The greatest evil about gambling is that it deters people from praying and remembering Allah, who says in this regard: “They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, ‘In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit’. And they ask you what they should spend. Say, ‘The excess’ [beyond needs]. Thus Allah makes clear to you the verses [of revelation] that you might give thought.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:219).

Tourism can be a good source of income, but tourism activities that promote prostitution, homosexuality, and drug abuse are categorically prohibited in Islam.

(1) See Al-Qaradawi, *The Role of Moral Values and Ethics in Islamic Economics* (pp. 57-62).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Ahmed (sound; 5716), Abu Dawud (3674), Ibn Majah (3380), and Al-Albani in *Mishkāt Al-Maṣābiḥ* (corrected; 2777).

This prohibition is based on the same reasons for which polytheist pilgrimage to Mecca was prohibited despite its economic benefits. Arab idol worshippers continued to perform their pilgrimage at the Ka`ba in Mecca for nine years after the beginning of Islam. In addition to worshipping their idols at the Ka`ba, they walked around it completely naked. They claimed that they did not want their bodies touched by the clothes they desecrated with sins. The Prophet (PBUH) cleansed Allah's house of worship from such traditions and practices. He sent Ali to Abu Bakr to announce the Great Pilgrimage and banned idol worshippers from performing their rituals at the Ka`ba and all naked pilgrims.⁽¹⁾ Of course, banning tens of thousands of pilgrims from the Ka`ba came at a significant financial loss for the Muslims of Mecca, but their faith required them to make such a sacrifice: "Oh you who have believed, indeed the polytheists are unclean, so let them not approach al-Masjid al-Haram [the Holy Mosque] after this, their [final] year. And if you fear privation, Allah will enrich you from His bounty if He wills. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 9:28). In summary, Muslims are not allowed to engage in economic activities that promote vice, such as tourism activities that involve serving alcohol or facilitating adultery. If they fear financial losses, Allah is the One who provides.

Muslims are encouraged to participate in permissible economic activities as they please, but not at the expense of worshipping. For example, they can spend as much time on commercial activities as they want, but the Holy Qur'an commands them to put all business exchanges on hold when it is time to pray on Friday: "Oh you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu`ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew" (62:9). The Holy Qur'an also denounces those who use business activities as an excuse to avoid prayer: "But when they saw a transaction or a diversion, [Oh Mohammed], they rushed to it and left you standing. Say, 'What is with Allah is better than diversion and than a transaction, and Allah is the best of providers'." (62:11).

Muslims are not allowed to engage in economic activities that involve forbidden items, such as selling alcohol, pigs, animals that died of natural causes, and idols. Moreover, Muslims are not allowed to knowingly engage in any economic activity that involves commodities that can be used to hurt people, such as selling weapons, if they know that the buyer would kill innocent victims or use it for any unjust purposes. This ruling is based on the hadith: "If Allah has forbidden something, its price is forbidden too."⁽²⁾ Muslims are also forbidden to hold monopolies on food or any other commodities that people need, if the purpose of the monop-

(1) See hadith No. 369, narrated by Al-Bukhari via Abu Hurayrah.

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ahmed (sound; 2678), Abu Dawud in his chapter on rentals (3488), Ibn Hibban in his chapter on selling and buying (4938), and Al-Albani in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* (corrected; 317).

oly is to reduce supply to increase demand and hence prices. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Hoarding [in monopoly] is nothing but sin,"⁽¹⁾ which is the same ill-deed of the Pharaoh and Haman: "Indeed, Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners" (Holy Qur'an, 28:8).

Islamic business ethics make it mandatory for Muslims to be honest about the conditions of the wares they sell; they cannot hide blemishes and problems with the products or exaggerate their good aspects. These are marketing strategies innovated in the West, and many Muslims have unfortunately adopted them to sell their products at higher prices than what they are really worth. Such strategies amount to deception, which the Prophet (PBUH) has categorically denounced: "Those who deceive us do not belong with us."⁽²⁾ Islamic business ethics also forbid Muslims from accumulating wealth through evil means; hence Allah forbids usury, gambling, and taking people's money through deceptive or unjust means.

Islamic economic ethics also regulate consumption and offer guidelines for maintaining a balanced approach to spending money. Allah says: "And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck [in stinginess] or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent" (Holy Qur'an, 17:29), and "Drink, but be not excessive! Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess" (Holy Qur'an, 7:31). Islam denounces those who squander their wealth and forbids excessive luxuries, such as using kitchenware made of gold or silver, and forbids men to wear gold or silk.⁽³⁾

*Thus, the Islamic economic system is unique in that it is founded on solid moral principles, as noted by European economists who contrast its moral foundation to the lack thereof in capitalist and communist economic systems. French economist Jacques Austruy writes in his book *L'Islam face au développement économique*:*

"Islam is a practical living system that is inseparable from morality; therefore, Muslims cannot accept a secular economic system. An economic system that is based on the Holy Qur'an is necessarily a moral one. As a result, these morals give new meanings to the concept of economic value, and they can fill in the intellectual vacuum created by mechanized production."

(1) Narrated via Mu' ammar Ibn Abdullah by Muslim (1598), Ahmed (15758), and Abu Dawud (3447).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim in his chapter on faith (101), Ahmed (7292), Abu Dawud (3452), Al-Tirmidhi (1315), and Ibn Hibban (4905).

(3) This is a reference to the hadith: "The Prophet, Peace be upon him, took some silk and placed to his right, and some gold and placed it to his left. Then he said, "These two are forbidden to the men of my ummah." " Narrated via Ali Ibn Abi Talib by Ahmed (sound; 935), Abu Dawud in his chapter on clothing (4057), Al-Nassa'i in his chapter on decorative items (5144), *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn* (806), and Al-Albani in *Mishkāt Al-Maṣābiḥ* (corrected; 4394).

Brux has decried the negative consequences of the sexual revolution in the West, and expressed his concern that the values of desire in today's economic systems will replace true moral values. Now the West is starting to realize the dire consequences of engaging in international negotiations to manage an unstable world. For example, many people are losing their jobs to machines. This change is coupled with a rise in the levels of demand for luxury and increasing interest in non-essential commodities.

The West has never attempted to reduce the enmity between people and machines. Islam has always been aware of the contradictions of the West. For Islam to face the West, while further strengthening its economy, it has made sure that moral values serve as the foundations of the economy, thus making the materialistic elements of the economy subservient to the needs of social justice. The mix between morality and economics, which J. Berth insists on, has never been coincidental in Islam, because Islam does not distinguish between the material and the spiritual.

While one could argue for a correlation between Protestantism and the rise of industrialization, the presumed causal relation was never real. This issue does not rise in the case of Islam, because the vast majority of its jurisprudence prohibits any economic development that is not based on its principles. As for the Western experience with applying the maxim "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto Allah the things that are Allah's,"⁽¹⁾ it is impossible to make such a distinction in Islam. By the same token, it is impossible to separate the state from church in Islam, the separation which effectively made it possible for materialism to take over in the West."⁽²⁾

We have ample historical evidence for the applicability of coupling morality with the economy, especially in periods when Islam was the dominant power in the lives of Muslims and the main guide for their behavior and activities.

Ethics And Politics

Islam establishes strong connections between ethics and politics, just as it does with economics. Islamic politics are as different from Machiavellian politics as can be possible. In other words, the end does not justify the means in Islamic politics. Rather, the end can be achieved only according to well-established moral principles, no matter how challenging this may be. These moral principles apply across the board, both to the relations between the state and its citizens (domestic

(1) Matthew 22:21; Luke 25:20.

(2) See Al Qaradawi, *The Role of Ethics in Islamic Economics*. Published by Maktabat Wahba (Cairo) and Arrisala (Beirut).

politics) and between the state and other states (international politics). Islam categorically rejects all “dirty means” to achieve “noble ends,” as the Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah is noble, and He accepts only what is noble.”⁽¹⁾

Regarding domestic politics, Allah addresses political leaders: “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing” (Holy Qur’an, 4:58). Political leaders are required to fulfill their duties, material or otherwise, toward all citizens and to establish justice. Nepotism, for example, is not allowed in Islam; a Muslim leader cannot favor his relatives, political party, or associates when it comes to filling state positions, because by doing so a leader would be giving to those who do not deserve and depriving those who deserve, both of which are forms of injustice. In fact, the Prophet (PBUH) makes nepotism as a warning sign for the demise of the Ummah. The Prophet was one day giving a sermon when a man asked about the Day of Judgment. The Prophet answered: “If trusts are lost, wait for the Day!” Another asked: “How can trusts be lost?” The Prophet (PBUH) responded: “If responsibilities are entrusted to those who are not qualified, then the end of the world is close.”⁽²⁾

Justice also includes inflicting punishments regardless of the offender’s social connections, power, wealth, or relationship to the ruling elite. The Prophet (PBUH) says in this regard: “What brought down the nations before you was injustice; if the rich and noble among them stole, they would leave them unpunished, but if the weak or poor stole, they would punish them. I swear to Allah, if my daughter Fatima stole, I would cut off her hand.”⁽³⁾ Domestic politics in Islam should be based on justice and equality among all citizens in terms of rights, obligations and punishments. The rulers have to be honest with the people and always tell the truth. The Prophet (PBUH) says that a lying king is one of the three kinds of people who are not to be seen by Allah on the Day of Judgment, and He does not purify them.⁽⁴⁾

The relations between a Muslim state and other states are also regulated by Islamic morality. These relationships are required to be based on honoring agreements and obligations. Allah says: “And fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, [Oh believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do. And do not be like the woman who undid her thread after it was tightly spun [by] taking

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim (1015), Ahmed (8348), and Al-Tirmidhi in *Tafsīr Al-Qur’ān*.

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on science (59) and Ahmed (8729).

(3) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari (3475) and Muslim (1688).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim in his chapter on faith (107) and Ahmed (10227).

your oaths as [means of] deceit between you because one community is more plentiful [in number or wealth] than another community. Allah only tries you thereby. And He will surely make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection that over which you used to differ. And if Allah had willed, He could have made you all [of] one religion, but He causes to stray whom He wills and guides whom He wills. And you will surely be questioned about what you used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 16:91-93). In these verses, Allah commands Muslims to respect their agreements because such agreements are as binding as Allah’s covenant. He also warns against breaching these agreements and likens such an act to a foolish person undoing her yarn after working hard to spin it. The verse also calls for international agreements to be based on good intentions and faithfulness with no deception or hidden agendas that make one party gain more from the agreement at the expense of the other party.

The Prophet (PBUH) was a role model for honoring agreements with other communities, even at times when his companions considered these treaties to be unjust to Muslims. For example, during the battle of Badr, Hudhayfa Ibn Al-Yaman and his father came to the Prophet asking him to let them join the Muslim army. He would not allow them to join because the two of them had an agreement with the tribe of Quraysh, according to which they had agreed not to fight alongside Muslims. He said to them: “Leave! We honor our agreement with them, and we ask Allah to help us against them.”⁽¹⁾ While some people think that there is no place for morality in politics, this is not the case in Islam. Islamic politics is based, first and foremost, on justice, honesty, and honor.

Ethics And Warfare

The previous section focused on Islamic ethics in times of peace. In this section, I discuss the applications of Islamic ethics in times of war. War does not preclude honor in rivalry, justice in treatment, and humane conduct during and after the fighting. War is an unfortunate necessity imposed by human nature, which motivates people to compete over resources: “And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned” (Holy Qur’an, 22:40) and “And if it were not for Allah checking [some] people by means of others, the earth would have been corrupted, but Allah is full of bounty to the worlds” (Holy Qur’an, 2:251).

War may be a necessity imposed by human instincts, but, in Islam, it has to be waged according to strict moral principles. For example, war is allowed only

(1) Narrated via Hudhayfa Ibn Al-Yaman by Muslim in his chapter on jihad (1787) and Ahmed (23354).

against tyrants and wrongdoers: “Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors” (Holy Qur’an, 2:190) and “Do not let the hatred of a people for having obstructed you from al-Masjid al-Haram lead you to transgress. And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty” (Holy Qur’an, 5:2). War is lawful only in the name of Allah and in the cause of justice: “Those who believe fight in the cause of Allah, and those who disbelieve fight in the cause of Taghut. So fight against the allies of Satan. Indeed, the plot of Satan has ever been weak” (Holy Qur’an, 4:76). Waging war is also permitted to save those in need: “What is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say: ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’” (Holy Qur’an, 4:75). War in Islam is conditioned by strict moral guidelines based on the values of mercy and forgivingness, even if it were a war against the staunchest enemies of Islam.

Many military leaders who believe in brute force commit the most heinous war crimes in the name of weakening their enemies, even if innocent people fall victim to their evil deeds. In Islam, however, only armed militants can be targeted, and all war crimes, such as mutilating bodies, killing those who lay down their weapons and surrender, cutting down trees, and destroying buildings, are strictly prohibited. Islamic rules of engagement prohibit killing women, children, the elderly, monks, and all non-combatants. Allah says: “Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors” (Holy Qur’an, 2:190).

The Prophet’s Sunnah has many examples of the applications of Islamic ethics during war time. When Muslims went into battle, the Prophet (PBUH) would tell them: “Fight in the Name of Allah and in Allah’s cause. Fight those who disbelieve in Allah, but do not be treacherous, mutilate, or kill a child.”⁽¹⁾ The Rightly Guided Caliphs followed in the Prophet’s footsteps; when they dispatched their armies, they would instruct their leaders not to kill the elderly, children, or women, not to cut down trees, and not to destroy buildings.⁽²⁾ They would also instruct them not to kill monks or anyone who dedicated their lives to worshipping Allah. Islamic historians also note that while the first caliph, Abu Bakr, was in Medina managing war against both the Persian Empire and Byzantine Empire, one of his commanders sent him the head of the enemy’s leader. The Muslim army commander thought this would please the caliph, but the latter was very upset because the command-

(1) Narrated via Buraydah by Muslim in his chapter on jihad (1731) and Ahmed (23030).

(2) See Ibn Al-Athir. *Al-Kāmil*, “Abu Bakr Al-Siddiq’s Instructions to Osama Ibn Zayd,” ed. by Omar Abd Al-Salam Tadmuri. Cairo: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1997, (2/196).

er's action amounted to inhumane mutilation of a dead body. Those around the caliph said to him: "This is what they do to us." He became angry and said: "We do not follow the Roman or Persian traditions. No heads shall be brought to me as of today."⁽¹⁾

Islamic ethical principles apply even when the battle is over, and they provide humanistic guidelines regarding the treatment of prisoners of war and the wounded. Allah describes those who worship Him genuinely as those who "give food even though they like it to the needy, the orphans, and the captives, [Saying] 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude'" (Holy Qur'an, 76:8-9).⁽²⁾

(1) See Said Ibn Mansour, *Sunan Said Ibn Mansour* (2649) and Ibn Abi Shayba in his *Siyar* (34303).

(2) Only a non-Muslim can be a prisoner of war according to the Islamic rules of engagement. See Al-Qaradawi, *Fiqh Al-Jihād wa-Falsafatih* (1/743-781).

1.3 Higher Objectives And Goals Of Islamic Ethics

Islamic ethics, or the Islamic moral character, is a set of moral values and principles that aim to achieve several objectives, including the fulfillment of worship to Allah alone, self-purification, becoming a moral individual, achieving success or happiness, and promoting human rights and dignity. These objectives are universal in the sense that they apply across all time periods, geographic locations, and all aspects of this life, material and spiritual, as well as the afterlife. In this chapter, I discuss some of these objectives in some detail.

The Fulfillment Of Worship To Allah Alone

The main goal of Islamic ethics is to fulfill one's duty of worshipping Allah, and Allah alone. This goal is what distinguishes Islamic ethics from secular moral systems. Fulfilling one's duty of worship is an act of gratitude toward Allah, Who created everything, honored mankind, gave them reason, made everything on earth and in the sky submit to them, provided all living things with their sustenance, and above all, sent His Messenger with His Book. Allah, who is the Creator, the Provider, and the Great, has every right to command His creation to act morally as He prescribes. It is the responsibility of people, whom He created, to obey and to submit. Everything that Allah commands us to do is inherently good, and everything that He forbids is inherently evil. Allah says: "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing" (Holy Qur'an, 4:58) and "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded" (Holy Qur'an, 16:90).

The Reality Of Faith

Faith is a covenant whereby an individual commits to fulfilling his or her duties toward Allah by striving to stay on the straight path and to steer away from everything that Allah has forbidden. Allah reminds people of this covenant in the Holy Qur'an: "And remember the favor of Allah upon you and His covenant with which He bound you when you said: 'We hear and we obey'; and fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of that within the chests" (5:7). This is why whenever Muslims pray, they ask for His guidance and support to faithfully stay on the straight path: "It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path - the path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray" (Holy Qur'an, 1:5-7). Worshipping Allah alone and seeking His support while striving to stay on the straight path are the

means to achieve this objective. Satan's main concern is to keep people off the straight path using all possible means, for he said: "Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]" (Holy Qur'an, 7:16-17). Satan's main strategy is to keep people from being grateful to Allah: "And few of My servants are grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 34:13).

On The Nature Of Worship

Allah created people for the purposes of knowing Him and to worshipping Him: "And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me. Indeed, it is Allah who is the [continual] Provider, the firm possessor of strength" (Holy Qur'an, 51:56-58). But how can people worship Him? Some people mistakenly limit acts of worship to performing religious rituals, such as praying, fasting, and the pilgrimage, among others. Unfortunately, this incomplete understanding is quite common. Worship in Islam is a lifestyle that encompasses all aspects of life, for worship includes performing religious rituals and abiding by Islamic moral principles, all of which are dedicated to Allah. In other words, a Muslim is required to do good deeds, such as telling the truth, working hard, honoring promises, acting modestly, averting the eye, and abstaining from hurting others, only as ways of worshipping Allah. Even when a Muslim honors his or her parents, maintains strong family ties, acts generously toward guests, protects the disadvantaged, feeds the hungry, or any other moral action, it is performed only in the service of Allah, not for any other reason.

The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that ethics, articles of faith, and religious rituals are inseparable: "Righteousness is not that you turn your face toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, travelers, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives *Zakat*; [those who] fulfill their promises when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous" (2:177). This verse provides a sufficient repose to some Jewish claims that worship applies only to rituals, as it clearly states that true righteousness includes believing in "Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets", rituals, such as praying and giving to *Zakat*, and in manners and moral behavior.

Allah says: "Is he who knows that what has been revealed to you from your Lord is the truth like someone who is blind? They will only be reminded who are people of understanding - Those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and do not break the

contract, And those who join that which Allah has ordered to be joined and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account, And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord, and establish prayer and spend from what We have provided for them secretly and publicly and prevent evil with good - Those will have the good consequence of [this] home” (Holy Qur’an, 13:19-22). In these verses, we see that patience, honor, and giving to *Zakat* are all connected to fearing Allah and praying. In other words, Islamic ethics, as represented in the interactions among the faithful, is based on the moral duties that constitute worshipping Allah. There is no separation between secular and religious moral values or principles; they are all the same thing in Islam.

Characteristics Of The True Worshippers

Allah says: “And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth gently, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace, And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer], And those who say: ‘Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering; Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence’. And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, in between that, [justly] moderate And those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a punishment. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide therein humiliated - Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good ones. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful. And he who repents and does righteousness does indeed turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance. And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood, and when they pass near ill speech, they pass by with dignity. And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord, do not fall upon them deaf and blind. And those who say: ‘Our Lord, grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes and make us an example for the righteous’. Those will be awarded the Chamber for what they patiently endured, and they will be received therein with greetings and [words of] peace, Abiding eternally therein. Good is the settlement and residence” (Holy Qur’an, 63-76). In these verses, we see how moral behavior is intertwined with acts of worship. For example, humility and patience are mentioned together with praying at night, whereas worshipping idols is mentioned in the same verse as murder and adultery. In summary, those who truly worship Allah have no distinction between their duties toward Him and their moral values and obligation; their interactions with people are part of their acts of worship.

Self-Purification

Islamic ethics aims to purify people's inner selves. Self-purification in Islam includes cleansing and developing the inner self. It involves ridding the self from evil traits and developing good ones. Scholars of Islamic education liken purifying the inner self to a building process, where one has to first get rid of debris to clear the building site, and then build up a new structure in stages on a clean site. The importance of purification comes in the Holy Qur'an in the form of an oath: "By the sun and its brightness And [by] the moon when it follows it And [by] the day when it displays it And [by] the night when it covers it And [by] the sky and He who constructed it And [by] the earth and He who spread it And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (91:1-10). These oaths are used to emphasize a few critical points, including the importance of purification for the self to fulfill its potential: "He said: 'Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]'" (Holy Qur'an, 20:50). It is Allah who created people and planted in their inner selves the ability for good and evil alike. It is this contradistinction that allows people to realize the conflict between good and evil, which in turn makes them responsible for training themselves to be good and to watch their actions: "He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Holy Qur'an, 91:1-10).

Allah teaches us that those who succeed in this life and in the afterlife are the ones who purify their inner selves by ridding themselves of their bad traits and developing good ones: "So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]" (Holy Qur'an, 3:185). In order to succeed and attain, people have to keep watching their inner selves and strive in jihad against desires, for the evil powers encourage us to do ill deeds until the evil side takes over and completely covers the good core, as Allah says: "And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Holy Qur'an, 91:10). Allah has sent us His book and His messenger to let us know that this is our only chance; we either seize the opportunity by striving, while Allah, His Messenger, and the faithful support us, or we let our wills get weak and our minds distracted to end up forgetting Allah, thus forgetting our inner selves and condemning ourselves to losing the battle. This life is our only chance, for we live only once: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself And mentions the name of his Lord and prays" (Holy Qur'an, 87:14-15).

Those who purify themselves are rewarded by Allah: "Whoever comes to his Lord as a criminal - indeed, for him is Hell; he will neither die therein nor live. But whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds - for those will be the highest degrees [in position]: Gardens of perpetual residence beneath which

rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. And that is the reward of the one who purifies himself” (Holy Qur’an, 20:74-76), and “Take, [Oh, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase” (Holy Qur’an, 9:103). The relationship between good deeds and purification recurs in many contexts in the Holy Qur’an: “That is purer for them” (24:70) and “That is better for you and purer” (2:232).

Virtue As An Objective In Its Own Right

Islamic ethics aims to promote virtue in and of itself as an objective. In other words, people should do good deeds as described in the Holy Qur’an, because these deeds are good in their own right, not because of the rewards people may receive in this life or in the afterlife for doing such deeds. This is a common theme in the Holy Qur’an, as in: “That is best for [all of] you” (2:54), “That is better for you and purer” (2:232), and “That is purer for them” (24:30). For example, Allah describes the manners of visiting people’s homes in the verses: “Oh you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded. And if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter them until permission has been granted to you. And if it is said to you: ‘Go back’, then go back; it is purer for you. And Allah is Knowing of what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 27-28). Note that people are commanded to abide by this behavior because it “is best for [all of] you” and because “it is purer for you,” not because of material rewards, for life is not assessed in materialistic terms only.

The Holy Qur’an lists many ethical acts that help with self-purification: “Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do” (24:30), and “When you divorce women and they have completed their term, do not prevent them from remarrying their [former] husbands if they agree among themselves on an acceptable basis. That is instructed to whoever of you believes in Allah and the Last Day. That is better for you and purer, and Allah knows and you know not” (2:232), “And when they have [nearly] completed their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or part with them according to acceptable terms. And bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah. That is instructed to whoever should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out” (65:2), and “Take, [Oh, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah’s blessings] upon them” (Holy Qur’an, 9:103). All these verses make it clear that people should act morally because morality is an objective in its own right.

Comprehensive Human Prosperity

Islamic ethics also aims to help people achieve comprehensive prosperity, which is what many peripatetic philosophers call “happiness”. I would use the term that is used in the Holy Qur’an, namely “comprehensive prosperity”, to avoid confusion. Comprehensive prosperity is to achieve everything that one desires and to be safe from everything one dislikes or fears. Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani defines it as “achieving one’s goals in this life and in the afterlife. In this life, success is to have the things that make life pleasant, such as survival, dignity, and wealth, among others. Success in the afterlife is achieving four everlasting things: life, richness, dignity and knowledge”⁽¹⁾, hence the saying “True life exists only in the afterlife.”⁽²⁾ The Holy Qur’an emphasizes the connection between ethics and comprehensive prosperity as in the following verse: “He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself” (Holy Qur’an, 87:14). The Holy Qur’an also describes comprehensive success as the motivation for many of Allah’s commandments and as a reward for those who abide by them, as in the following verses:

“Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed” (22:77).

“Oh you who have believed, fear Allah and seek the means [of nearness] to Him and strive in His cause that you may succeed” (5:35).

“Oh you who have believed, indeed, wine, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful” (5:90).

“And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful” (3:104).

“Oh you who have believed, do not consume usury, doubled and multiplied, but fear Allah that you may be successful” (3:130).

“Oh you who have believed, persevere and endure and remain stationed and fear Allah that you may be successful” (3:200).

“And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of] their headcovers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to

(1) This is an excerpt from a hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari (3795), Muslim (1805), Ahmed (12757), al-Tirmidhi (3856), and Al-Nassa’i (8256).

(2) Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani, *Al-Mufradāt* (1/644).

their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed" (24:31).

"And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah, and remember Allah often that you may succeed" (62:10).

Most philosophic approaches to ethics do not recognize the association between success (or happiness) and ethics. Rather, they tend to focus on personal happiness from a materialistic perspective. Islam, on the other hand, views ethics as inseparable from happiness both in this life and the afterlife. It also sees no separation between personal happiness and social wellbeing or between the materialistic and the psychological aspects of happiness. Islam views human existence in this world, with all its challenges, as preparation for eternal success. Those who purify themselves by means of true faith, useful knowledge, and good deeds conquer the animal within and become prepared for eternal happiness: "And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it. And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (91:7-10). Self-purification is a prerequisite to success, and heaven is home of the pure, those who depart this world to meet their Creator in a pure state. Conversely, those who die impure are resurrected in the same state and end up in eternal hellfire: "Indeed, whoever comes to his Lord as a criminal - indeed, for him is Hell; he will neither die therein nor live. But whoever comes to Him as a believer having done righteous deeds - for those will be the highest degrees [in position]: Gardens of perpetual residence beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally. And that is the reward of one who purifies himself" (Holy Qur'an, 20:74-76). Heaven is only for those with pure hearts: "The ones whom the angels take in death, [being] good and pure; [the angels] will say: 'Peace be upon you. Enter Paradise for what you used to do'" (Holy Qur'an, 16:32) and "its [heavens] keepers say: 'Peace be upon you; you have become pure; so enter it to abide eternally therein'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:73).

Those whose inner selves are not purified from the evils of sin do not go to heaven, even if they were faithful, unless they go through a process of purification in hell. They first have to be cleansed of their sins and then enter haven in a pure

state. People with poor morality are not permitted into heaven, as stated in the following hadiths:

"Whoever has a mustard seed's weight of arrogance in his heart shall not be admitted into Paradise."⁽¹⁾

"Allah created Heaven with His own hands; He made in it rivers that flow and plentiful fruits that hang low. Then He commanded it to speak, and it said, 'The faithful have truly succeeded.' Allah said, 'By My glory, no miserly person shall be My neighbor in you.'"⁽²⁾

"Allah has forbidden heaven for whoever dies having deceived those he was entrusted with."⁽³⁾

"Three shall never enter heaven: he who facilitates fornication, a woman who acts like men, and wine addicts." He was asked: "Oh Messenger of Allah, we know what a wine addict is like, but what is meant by 'he who facilitates adultery'? He said: 'A man who does not care, who has fornicated with the women of his household'."⁽⁴⁾

Thus, heaven is forbidden for those who let evil take over their inner selves, unless they purify themselves. In summary, Allah has made success in the afterlife as a reward for those who abide by His law, which He revealed via the Angel Gabriel and which comprises articles of faith, acts of worship, and ethics. Good deeds in this life lead to happiness in the afterlife in fulfillment of Allah's oath that only the good among His people shall inhabit His good land.

Prosperity In This Life

We now turn to prosperity in this life, because abiding by Allah's moral law, not only leads to success in the afterlife, but in this life as well. Many of the verses listed above use the term for "prosperity" in reference to an absolute construct that encompasses success in this life and in the afterlife. There are, however, several other verses in the Holy Qur'an that explicitly associate prosperity and happiness in this life to abiding by Allah's Word, and the lack of happiness and prosperity to disobeying it. For example, Allah says to Adam and his wife: "[Allah] said, 'Descend from Paradise - all, [your descendants] being enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Mulsim (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud (4091).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Tabarani in *AL-Kabir* (11/184) and *Al-Awsat* (5518), and Al-Haythamin in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (18639).

(3) Narrated via Ma'qil Ibn Yasar by Al-Bukhari (7151) and Muslim (142).

(4) Narrated via Ammar Ibn Yasser by Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab Al-Imān* (10310), Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2071).

guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]. And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will bring him on the Day of Resurrection blind'” (Holy Qur'an, 20:123-124). These verses establish a direct relationship between obeying Allah's Word and happiness, a relationship that started at the beginning of human history.

In another context, the Holy Qur'an makes explicit the relationship between misery on earth and disobeying Allah's Word: “And if only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied [the messengers], so We seized them for what they were earning” (7:96); “[Allah revealed] that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant provision” (72:16); and “Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while a believer - We will surely cause them to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do” (16:97). Prosperity, or happiness, is indeed the reward of faith and good deeds.

People sometimes misunderstand the concept of happiness in the same way they sometimes misunderstand the meaning of misery. The confusion comes up when we see faithful people suffering from poverty or persecution, while many infidels are extremely wealthy. Appearances are often misleading, because if we look under the surface, we realize that happiness is a psychological state, not a physical state of comfort. Happiness is a state of mind that stems from faith in Allah, a state of peace, love, and bliss. Happiness comes from a deeply rooted conviction that we are free, for only Allah has power over us. Happy people are content with what they already have, but they look as if they have everything they want. This state of mind is described by Ibrahim Ibn Adham who says: “We live in such bliss that if kings and their children knew about it, they would fight us over it with swords.”⁽¹⁾ But, kings do not know about this happiness, and they cannot take it even with swords.⁽²⁾

Misery, on the other hand, is not the same thing as poverty. Misery is psychological pain, the type of anxiety that makes people feel like they are sleeping on a bed of nails. This suffering is for those with shaken faith whose hearts are dark and empty. They have no straight path to strive for. Rather, they are like a slave owned by different masters who always flight among themselves: “Allah presents an example: a slave owned by quarreling partners and another belonging exclusively to one man - Are they equal in comparison? Praise be to Allah! But most of them do not know” (Holy Qur'an, 39:29).

(1) See Abu Nuaym *Hilyat Al-Awliyā'* (7/370).

(2) See Qaradawi, *Faith and Life*, Maktabat Wahba, 13th edition. 2013.

Caring For The Individual

Building a good citizen of the Ummah is one of the most fundamental objectives of Islam, the Holy Qur'an and our kind-hearted Prophet (PBUH). Islam, the universal religion that was sent down to the last of the prophets, has come to build humanity represented in every individual person. Islam came about at a time when humanity had matured and was ready to receive the final message, a message addressed to all human beings regardless of race, ethnicity, or geographic location. This message cares, first and foremost, about mankind, whom Allah entrusted with developing the earth and establishing justice by upholding His law. Allah has endowed mankind with the skills, abilities, and knowledge to serve in these functions, all of which aim to promote peace and love.

Caring For Human Rights And Dignity

Protecting human rights and dignity is at the top of Islam's objectives, for Allah says: "And We have certainly honored the children of Adam" (Holy Qur'an, 17:70). Human dignity is achieved by protecting human rights and supporting the disadvantaged. In this section I discuss how Islam establishes and promotes human dignity, human rights, and human welfare.

A. Human Dignity

The Holy Qur'an emphasizes that humans are unique among Allah's creation, for He created Adam with His own hands, breathed from His spirit into him, and placed him and his children in charge of the earth. This honor was something angels wished for, but it was not granted to them because they are unable to fulfill such duties. Allah says:

"And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on land and sea and provided for them from the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference" (Holy Qur'an, 17:70).

"Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?" (Holy Qur'an, 31:20).

"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed in this are signs for those who give thought" (Holy Qur'an, 45:13).

"And [mention, Oh Mohammed], when your Lord said unto the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority'. They said: 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and

sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ Allah said: ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know.’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 2:30)

For these reasons, the Holy Qur’an condemns those extremists who claim that the permissible good things in life are forbidden: “Say, ‘Who has forbidden the adornment which Allah has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?’” (7:32). The Holy Qur’an also denounces those who humiliate themselves by worshipping nature and its powers, all of which Allah has made subservient to mankind: “And of His signs are the night and day and the sun and moon. Do not prostrate to the sun or to the moon, but prostrate to Allah who created them. It should be Him that you worship” (41:37). Allah also warns people who give up their own agency and dignity by allowing themselves to be subservient to others: “And they will say: ‘Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way’” (63:67). Allah also forbids people to make others holy with the power to decide what is forbidden and what is not: “They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one Allah; there is no Allah except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him” (9:31).

The Holy Qur’an sends a specific message to the People of the Book, Christians and Jews: “Say, ‘Oh People of the Book, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and will not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah’. But if they turn away, then say, ‘Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]’” (3:64). This message is completed with the verse: “It is not for a human [prophet] to be given the Scripture, authority, and prophethood by Allah and then say to the people, ‘Be servants to me rather than Allah’” (3:79).

B. Human Rights

Islam established a covenant for human rights 14 centuries before the development of the modern concept of human rights, which some erroneously think is a recent development in history. Islam protects intellectual freedom: “Say, ‘Observe what is in the heavens and earth’. But of no avail will be signs or warnings for those who do not believe’” (Holy Qur’an, 10:101), and “Say, ‘I only advise you to do one thing - that you stand for Allah [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought’” (Holy Qur’an, 34:46). Islam establishes the freedom of religion: “There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion” (Holy Qur’an, 2:256) and “Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, [Oh Mohammed], would you compel people to become believers?” (Holy Qur’an, 10:99). The same applies

to the freedom of expression: “The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong” (Holy Qur’an, 9:71). Islam makes equality among people a law regardless of their race or lineage: “Oh mankind, indeed We have created you males and females and made you peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble among you in the sight of Allah are the most righteous. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted” (Holy Qur’an, 49:13) and “So when the Horn is blown, no kinship will there be among them that Day, nor will they ask about one another” (Holy Qur’an, 23:101). Islam has granted all people many rights, such as those listed below:

- The right to enjoy beauty and Allah’s Bounty

“Say: ‘Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 7:32)

- The rights for men and women to get married and form families:

“And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.” (Holy Qur’an, 30:21)

- The right to have children within marriage:

“And Allah has made for you from yourselves mates and has made for you from your mates sons and grandchildren.” (Holy Qur’an, 16:72)

- The right for children to live regardless of their gender:

“Do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them.” (Holy Qur’an, 6:151)

“And do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin.” (Holy Qur’an, 17:31)

“And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked, For what sin she was killed?” (Holy Qur’an, 81:8-9)

“And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides from the people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide.” (Holy Qur’an, 16:58-59)

- The right of every human being to live unless a capital crime is committed:

"And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason." (Holy Qur'an, 6:151; 17:33)

"Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain all of mankind. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved all of mankind." (Holy Qur'an, 5:32)

- The right to work, travel, and seek what Allah provides, even on Friday other than prayer time, and even during the Hajj:

"It is He who made the earth tame for you - so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision." (Holy Qur'an, 67:15)

"Oh you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew. And when the prayer has been concluded, disperse within the land and seek from the bounty of Allah." (Holy Qur'an, 62:9-10)

"There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord [during Hajj]" (Holy Qur'an, 2:198)

- The right of every man and woman to earn a living independently, to own property by legal means, and to have those properties protected:

"For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned. (Holy Qur'an, 4:32)

"Oh you who have believed, do not consume one another's wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful." (Holy Qur'an, 4:29)

- The right to have privacy in one's home and the right to have people enter only with permission:

"Oh you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants. That is best for you; perhaps you will be reminded. And if you do not find anyone therein, do not enter them until permission has been given to you. And if it is said to you: 'Go back', then go back; it is purer for you." (Holy Qur'an, 24:27-28)

- The right to have one's dignity protected:

"Oh you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames." (Holy Qur'an, 49:11)

- The right to self-defense:

"Whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him." (Holy Qur'an, 2:194)

- The right to justice even for infidels and enemies:

"When you judge between people judge with justice." (Holy Qur'an, 4:58)

"Do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is closer to righteousness." (Holy Qur'an, 5:8)

"Indeed, We have revealed to you, [Oh, Mohammed], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful." (Holy Qur'an, 4:105-107)

This last verse is said to have been revealed to clear a Jewish man who was unfairly accused by some Muslims.

- The right to a minimum living standard

"And those within whose wealth is a known right - For the petitioner and the deprived." (Holy Qur'an, 70:24-25)

"Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them." (Holy Qur'an, 9:103)

In Islam, orphans, the poor, and stranded travelers have rights to share the wealth of those who can afford *Zakat*. They also have the right to be provided for from state funds.

- The right to engage in dialogue with the political leadership, disagree with them, and demand ruling according to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah

"Oh you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result." (Holy Qur'an, 4:59)

In fact, the Prophet himself was ordered to abide the same rules, as Allah says in the context of the women's oath of allegiance:

"Oh Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging not to associate anything with Allah [...] nor will they disobey you in what is right." (Holy Qur'an, 60:12)

- The right to denounce evil, reject corruption, and resist injustice

"And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped." (Holy Qur'an, 11:113)

"Cursed are those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary, for they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed. They used not to prevent one another from the wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing." (Holy Qur'an, 5:78-79)

"And fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty." (Holy Qur'an, 8:25)

"And do not obey the order of the transgressors who cause corruption in the land and do not amend." (Holy Qur'an, 26:151-152)

All of these rights are mandated in the Holy Qur'an as rules rather than rights only. While people can sometimes relinquish their rights, mandated rules are not to be given up.

C. Ensuring The Rights Of The Disadvantaged

The Holy Qur'an pays special attention to the rights of the disadvantaged to protect them against injustice and neglect by state officials. It is important to note here that many of the verses that protect the disadvantaged were among the very first verses to be revealed in Mecca, such as those listed below:

"As for the orphan, do not oppress [him]." (Holy Qur'an, 93:9)

In the context of those in hellfire explaining how they ended up there, Allah says: *"[And asking them], 'What put you into Saqar [hellfire]?' They will say: 'We were not among those who prayed, nor did we feed the poor'" (Holy Qur'an, 74:42-44).*

“Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan - And does not encourage the feeding of the poor” (Holy Qur’an, 107:1-3). Note how this verse makes it is clear that people are not only required to feed the poor, but also to encourage feeding them. Allah explains why some people go to Hell: “Indeed, he did not believe in Allah, the Most Great, nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor” (Holy Qur’an, 69:33-34). Here we see the connection between faith and the moral responsibility of encouraging others to feed the poor. Conversely, we see that not encouraging feeding the poor is associated with the lack of faith. Allah addresses the unjust pre-Islamic community: “No! But you do not honor the orphans, and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor” (Holy Qur’an, 89:17-18).

The protection of orphans is another recurrent theme in the Holy Qur’an. For example, protecting orphans’ property or inheritance, if they have any, is one of the ten commandments in the Chapter of Al-Anaam (The Cattle), as Allah says: “And do not approach the orphan’s property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity” (Holy Qur’an, 6:152), which is repeated in (Holy Qur’an, 17:34). The rules for managing orphans’ property or inheritance are laid out in Chapter of Al-Nisaa’ (The Women), where Allah says: “Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming fire into their bellies. And they will be burned in a Blaze” (Holy Qur’an, 4:10). If orphan children have not properties or inheritance, the Holy Qur’an gives them a share from state funds and *Zakat*: “*Zakat* expenditures are only for the poor and for the needy” (Holy Qur’an, 9:60), “And know that anything you obtain of war booty - then indeed, for Allah is one fifth of it and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and the orphans, the needy, and the [stranded] travelers” (Holy Qur’an, 8:41), and “What Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] travelers - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution of wealth among the rich among you” (Holy Qur’an, 59:7).

Zakat is also taken from state funds because Allah has commanded collecting it to provide for the poor: “Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah’s blessings] upon them” (Holy Qur’an, 9:103). If the state does not collect it, those who can afford to give *zakat* are required to seek out poor people and give it to them directly without the poor even asking. The poor and the needy also have the right to receive financial support from their relatives and the rest of the Ummah: “Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is believing in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets; giving wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the stranded travelers, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; establishing

prayer, and giving *Zakat*” (Holy Qur’an, 2:177). Allah also says: “Give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler” (Holy Qur’an, 17:26); “Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, and the needy” (Holy Qur’an, 4:36); and “They ask you, [Oh Mohammed], what they should spend. Say, ‘Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents, relatives, orphans, the needy, and the traveler’” (Holy Qur’an, 3:215).

Most importantly, the Holy Qur’an allows going up in arms in the cause of protecting the disadvantaged and the oppressed, especially for the protection of their honor and to put an end to the injustices they endure. Allah says: “Let those fight in the cause of Allah who sell the life of this world for the Hereafter. And he who fights in the cause of Allah and is killed or achieves victory - We will bestow upon him a great reward. And what is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, ‘Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?’” (Holy Qur’an, 4:74-75).

These are some of the articles of human rights which the Holy Qur’an mandates and treats as the foundation of Islamic creed. These rights are the underlying principles of Islamic education, culture, and jurisprudence. The Ummah is founded on these principles as we saw in Islamic history and civilization.⁽¹⁾

The Cohesive Family

One of the objectives of Islamic ethics is establishing and maintaining strong family ties. This objective can be achieved only if families are established on solid grounds from the very beginning, developed properly, and protected from the social evils that can tear them apart. To this end, Islam views people as social beings that cannot survive in isolation. Marriage is the foundation of social structure, and it has to be established on foundations of mutual acceptance, agreement, a contract with witnesses, and a dowry that the man pays to the woman as a gift: “And give the women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they give up willingly to you anything of it, then take it in satisfaction and ease” (Holy Qur’an, 4:4). These conditions are set to make marriage public knowledge, and of course the more people know about it, the better. However, the minimum is two witnesses if there are conditions that make it difficult to announce the marriage publicly.

To protect the sanctity of marriage, Islam prohibits fornication, which can

(1) See Qaradawi, *Kayfa Nata’āmal ma’a Al-Qur’ān Al-Karīm*. Dar Al-Shuruq, 2011.

cause the spread of many social evils. At the same time, Islam encourages people to make marriage affordable. Some people make it difficult for young couples to get married by making harsh stipulations that have nothing to do with religion. In fact, Islam recommends that dowries be within reason: “And marry the unmarried among you and the righteous among your male slaves and female slaves. If they should be poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty” (Holy Qur’an, 24:32). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “When someone whose religion and character you are pleased with proposes to (someone under the care) of one of you, then marry to him. If you do not do so, then there will be turmoil in the land and abounding discord.”⁽¹⁾

To start a family built on solid foundations, young men should make marriage decisions based on the virtue and faith of their potential spouses rather than wealth, beauty, or social status. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A woman is married for one of four things: her wealth, her social status, her beauty, and her religion. Marry the religious woman; otherwise, you will be sorry.”⁽²⁾

The relationship between a married couple is to be based on faithfulness, trust, and companionship, since the Holy Qur’an refers to spouses as “the companion at your side” (Holy Qur’an, 4:36). In other words, a couple is two bodies with one soul, or as Allah says “of one another” in the verse “Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] among you, whether male or female; you are of one another” (Holy Qur’an, 3:195). A husband and wife complement each other, and neither can do without the other. Marriage in Islam is built on affection and mercy, as Allah says, “And of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought” (Holy Qur’an, 30:21). This verse uses the Arabic second person plural pronoun in “He placed between you affection and mercy” as opposed to the dual pronoun. This is because the affection and mercy move from the nucleus of the married couple to the rest of their family and across society.

The Holy Qur’an Commands Men To Be Kind To Women

The Holy Qur’an commands men to be patient with women and kind to them, because kindness, or affection, gives life meaning and purpose. Allah says: “Oh, you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. And do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Tirmidhi (1084), Ibn Majah (1967), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 1022).

(2) Narrated via Abdullah by Ibn Amr Ibn Al-As by Mulsim (1467), Ahmed (6567), Al-Nassa’i (3232), and Ibn Majah (1855).

them unless they commit a clear immorality. And live with them in kindness, for if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good. But if you want to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [in gifts], do not take [back] from it anything. Would you take it in injustice and manifest sin? And how could you take it while you have gone in unto each other and they have taken from you a solemn covenant?" (Holy Qur'an, 4:19-21).

Sexual intercourse and pleasure is a right for both married men and women alike, except of course during the times when it is forbidden such as during the menstrual period and within the first few weeks after giving birth: "And they ask you about menstruation. Say: 'It is harmful, so keep away from wives during menstruation. And do not approach them until they are pure. And when they have purified themselves, then come to them from where Allah has ordained for you. Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves. Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:222-223).

Women should also be patient with their husbands and realize that for life to go on, one has to make sacrifices and be patient. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of her personal traits, he will be pleased with another trait."⁽¹⁾ This hadith asks men not to expect perfection, for it does not exist. A wise man seeks a balance in his relationship with his wife because people are not angels or prophets, and everyone has their faults and limitations. If Allah is forgiving, people should also be forgiving. This balance is necessary, especially if they have children, which they should try to do, and if they cannot conceive, they should seek medical attention. When a man approaches his wife for sex, he should pray: "In the name of Allah. Oh Allah! Protect us from Satan and also protect what you bestow upon us [the coming offspring] from Satan."⁽²⁾

On Raising Children

If Allah blesses a couple with a child, boy or girl, they should celebrate: "To Allah belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth; He creates what he wills. He gives to whom He wills female [children], and He gives to whom He wills males

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim (1469), Ahmed (8363), Abu Ya'la in his *Musnad* (6418).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on ablution (141) and Muslim in his chapter on sex (1434).

- Or He makes them [both] males and females, and He renders whom He wills barren” (Holy Qur’an, 42:49-50). Note that Allah mentions girls first, which is why Muslims traditionally say: “Blessed is the woman whose first child is a girl” and it is not permissible to do what some people used to do in the Days of Ignorance before Islam: “And when one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief” (Holy Qur’an, 16:58). In the story of the Virgin Mary, her mother (the wife of `Imran) says: “My Lord, indeed I have pledged to You what is in my womb, consecrated [for Your service], so accept this from me. Indeed, You are the Hearing, the Knowing.” But when she delivered her, she said: “My Lord, I have delivered a female.” And Allah is most knowing of what she delivered: “And the male is not like the female. And I have named her Mary, and I seek refuge for her in You and [for] her descendants from Satan, the expelled [from the mercy of Allah]” (Holy Qur’an, 3:35-36).

Parents, supported by the entire community, should raise their children, boys and girls, to develop high moral standards. This goal is achieved by educating them properly all the way through higher education and by instilling in them a sense of belonging and fraternity, which Allah mentions in the Holy Qur’an: “The believers are but brothers” (Holy Qur’an, 49:10), and “He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers” (Holy Qur’an, 3:103). The Prophet (PBUH) calls on all Muslims to be brothers and sisters: “Be you, Oh worshippers of Allah, brothers,”⁽¹⁾ for fraternity promotes equality, cooperation, and solidarity. Finally, it is important to note that a Muslim family is what is called the extended family. It includes parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, siblings, uncles, aunts, and their spouses and children, as Allah says: “those of [blood] relationship are more entitled [to inheritance] in the decree of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 9:75).

An Upright Society

In essence, Islamic ethics aims to establish an upright society. It is not enough to have a moral individual who believes in Allah, prays, performs religious rituals, and refrains from committing sinful acts. This is because a moral individual needs the support of a moral community, without which no individual can survive. In the Holy Qur’an, Allah commands Muslims to establish a faithful community. The phrase “Oh, you who believe” occurs in the Holy Qur’an over 90 times, always using the second person plural pronoun, and not a single time with a singular pronoun for “you”. Interestingly, the verses where this phrase occurs were all revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) after his migration to Medina, where the first Muslim community was established. Before the migration, there was no Muslim community to be addressed in the plural.

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (6064) and Muslim (2563).

A Sense of Community

The Glorious Holy Qur'an instills a deep sense of community in the hearts and minds of the faithful. For example, *al-Fatiha*, the Opening Chapter, which scholars call "the Constitution of the Holy Qur'an" is read in every prayer, where one says: "It is You *we* worship and You *we* ask for help" (1:5). A Muslim uses the plural pronoun for "we" whether he or she is praying alone in the middle of the night or with a group in broad day light. In the next verse, one says: "Guide *us* to the straight path" (1:6), again using the first person plural pronoun. In every prayer, a Muslim represents the conscience of the community and the entire Ummah, speaking on everyone's behalf, and praying for all of them.

Islam also views every individual as an inseparable part of an indivisible whole, a part that cannot, and should not, function in isolation. This is why there are many social duties that Muslims are required to do, such as offering advice in matters of religion, calling on others to do good deeds, encouraging them to be patient and kind, ordering them to do right and to refrain from doing wrong, and cooperating to resist tyranny and corruption. These are all religious duties, required of every Muslim man and woman. These duties are second in importance only to the fundamental acts of worship, such as praying and fasting. Without these social duties, one's faith is far from being sound.

How can a true Muslim claim to believe in Allah and to do righteous deeds, if he or she asks to be excused from advising others to be truthful and patient? How can such a person expect to be saved? Allah has specified four conditions for people to be saved: "Indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who have believed, done righteous deeds, advised each other to truth, and advised each other to patience" (Holy Qur'an, 103:2-3). One cannot claim to be a true Muslim if he or she only performs the rituals associated with the Five Pillars of Islam (declaring that there is only one Allah and Mohammed is His Prophet, praying, giving to *Zakat*, fasting during Ramadan, and going on pilgrimage to Mecca for those who can). To be a true Muslim, one has also to call on people and advise them to follow the true path, and to order them to do righteous deeds and to refrain from doing evil. These are mandated religious duties: "Let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 3:104). The phrase "Let there be [arising] from you a nation" does not limit this duty to a small group working on behalf of the Ummah. Rather, it mandates this duty for every member of the community. In the Arabic text, this grammatical construction is used to issue direct orders. In other words, this verse means that the entire Ummah is required to follow these commandments.

The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Religion is giving advice." When asked to clarify, he said, "The advice is to obey Allah, His Prophet, and the Holy Qur'an. Advice is

to be given to the leaders of Muslims and to the Muslim community.”⁽¹⁾ It is no surprise that the Holy Qur’an considers it a right and an obligation for every Muslim to order others to do good deeds and refrain from sin. This is one of the main distinctive features of the Ummah. In fact, this obligation is on equal footing with faith itself, for Allah says: “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah. If only the People of the Book had believed, it would have been better for them. Among them are believers, but most of them are defiantly disobedient” (Holy Qur’an, 3:110). The Holy Qur’an also condemns those communities that ignored this obligation: “Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed. They used not to prevent one another from wrongdoing. How wretched was that which they were doing?” (5:78-79).

Developing The Earth As A Shari’a Objective

The development of the earth is central to the message of Islam, hence the focus on Islamic social foundations. For example, Islam does not approve of monasticism as a way of life. Monasticism was innovated in the early history of Christianity as a way of worshipping Allah and getting closer to Him; however, it was not observed properly. Islam does not allow monasticism, because Islam looks at the world differently. The Islamic Shari’a requires people to engage in society to promote life, to cultivate the land, to help others have a better life, and to collaborate on reducing economic disparities. This perspective is the greatest contribution of Islam to the world.

The Religious Duty To Feed The Poor

Supporting the poor and feeding them is one of the religious duties that receive significant attention in the Holy Qur’an. It is even treated as a good indication of faith: “Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan, and does not encourage the feeding of the poor” (107:1-3). The Holy Qur’an also reveals some of what is in store for those who end up in Hell, where they will say: “My wealth has not availed me. Gone from me is my authority” (Holy Qur’an, 69:28-29). The Guardians of Hell would order: “Seize him and shackle him. Then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is 70 cubits insert him. Indeed, he did not believe in Allah, the Most Great, nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor” (69:30-34). This raises the question

(1) Narrated via Tamim Al-Dari by Muslim in his chapter on faith (55), Ahmed (16940), Abu Dawud in his chapter on manners (4944), and Al-Nassa’i in his chapter on the oath of allegiance (4197).

of why unjust rich people deserve such torment in the afterlife. The Holy Qur'an offers two answers: First, they do not believe in Allah Almighty, while faith is what nature calls for and what all the prophets have called for. Second, they did not feed the poor or encourage feeding them. They even let them starve and did not defend them. Abi Al-Dardaa' once told his wife: "Allah has a chain that is 70 cubits long. We broke half of it by believing in Allah, and we need to break the other half by encouraging people to feed the poor."⁽¹⁾

In the Holy Qur'an, Allah describes pre-Islamic society as a dark age where people did not care to provide for the poor: "No! But you do not honor the orphan, and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. You consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether, wealth" (89:17-20). This was the kind of unjust society where the disadvantaged, the orphans, the poor, and stranded travelers could barely survive.

The Rights Of The Disadvantaged In Muslim Societies

Islam mandates the protection of everyone's rights, especially the disadvantaged. In Islam, the disadvantaged have the right to a decent life that provides for their basic needs. For example, it is not acceptable in Islam for someone to go to bed hungry while the neighbor has food, for the Prophet (PBUH) said: "He who goes to bed while his neighbor is hungry is not faithful."⁽²⁾ These protections take many forms, including financial support; poor people have the right to receive *Zakat* (*Zakat*) on an annual basis in addition to the seasonal *Zakat* on investments that bring in regular income. The disadvantaged also have a share in all sources of state income, such as war booty and properties whose owners die with nobody to inherit them, following Allah's commandment: "What Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns - it is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich from among you" (Holy Qur'an, 59:7). This verse makes it clear that wealth has to be distributed rather than accumulated by a small group, which is the defining criterion of Capitalism, which people have long disliked and resisted.

Important Social Rulings

Islam couples the major religious duties with a series of important social responsibilities that make the former beneficial to the poor and the rich alike. For example,

(1) Attributed by Al-Suyuti in *Al-Dur al-Manthūr* (8/274) to Abd Bin Hamid and Ibn Al-Mundhir.

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (112), Abu Ya'la (2699), Al-Tabarani (12/154), Al-Hakim (4/167), and Al-Albani in *Al-Shaḥīḥa* (corrected; 149).

the Friday prayer is required to be performed in a group, while other prayers can be optionally performed in groups, which gives people from all social classes the opportunity to interact at least once a week. Fasting is a religious duty that makes the rich experience the hunger of poor people. The annual pilgrimage to Mecca is also a social experience where people travel and worship together regardless of their social class, which helps them learn how to live in peace with themselves, with each other, and even with animals and plants: “Forbidden to you is game from the land as long as you are in the state of ihram” (Holy Qur’an, 5:96) and “*Hajj* is [during] well-known months. Whoever has made *Hajj* obligatory upon himself therein [by entering the state of ihram], there is [to be for him] no sexual relations, no disobedience, and no disputing during *Hajj*. Whatever good you do - Allah knows it. And take provisions, but indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah. And fear Me, Oh you of understanding” (Holy Qur’an, 2:197).

The Middle-Ground Ummah

The purpose of all Islamic moral teachings is to build the “middle-ground” Ummah, which Allah has named in “We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you (Holy Qur’an, 2:143). The term “the middle-ground Ummah” means several things. In one sense, it is a faithful community that stays on the straight path, as we understand from the following verses: “Guide us to the straight path -The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray” (Holy Qur’an, 1:6-7) and “This is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 6:153). When asked to explain the meaning of the straight path, the Prophet (PBUH) drew a line in the sand and said: “This is Allah’s path.” Then he drew several other lines to the right and left of the original line and said: “These are the other paths, and for each of them is a devil who calls on people to follow.”⁽¹⁾ He then read: “This is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] ways, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 6:153). We see the same idea recurring in other verses, such as: “The heaven He raised and imposed the balance that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance” (Holy Qur’an, 55:7-9). These verses make a clear statement: The Muslim Ummah is a moderate community, where everyone knows their rights and obligations and acts accordingly.

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Ahmed (good; 4142), Al-Nassa’i in *Al-Kubrā fi Al-Tafsīr* (11174), Ibn Hibban in *Al-Muqaddima* (6), and Al-Hakim in his *Tafsīr* (2/239).

Being a moderate community is a distinctive feature of the Muslim Ummah, feature which is not found in the other communities, such as those who altered Allah's message to include people's innovations and sometimes imagination. This is why we often see scholars interpreting the phrases "those who have evoked [Your] anger" and "those who are astray" as references to the Jews and Christians, respectively. These verses occur in the *Fatiha*: "Guide us to the straight path -The path of those upon whom You have bestowed favor, not of those who have evoked [Your] anger or of those who are astray" (1:6-7).⁽¹⁾ The Jewish and Christian Ummahs represent cases of departure from the straight path, for the Jews killed Allah's prophets, whereas the Christians made them divine. The Jews have forbidden many permissible things, whereas the Christians have made many forbidden things permissible; they even claimed that "everything is good for the good people." The Jews have gone into excess with the ritualistic aspects of their religion, whereas Christians have eliminated most of them. The Jews are considered the ones who provoked Allah's anger for the major sins they committed, particularly disbelieving prophets and killing them. They even transgressed and made false claims about Allah: "And the Jews say 'The hand of Allah is chained'" (Holy Qur'an, 5:64). The Christians, on the other hand, have adopted some of the Romans' pagan rituals into their belief system; hence they are considered to have strayed off the true path. Islam instructs people to avoid both types of extremes and to stay true to the religion, i.e. on the straight path, the path of all prophets and their true followers.

In his treatise *The Correct Response to those who Altered the Religion of the Messiah*, Ibn Taymiyah states: "Allah Almighty has given Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) a comprehensive message that distinguishes him from all other prophets. Allah has also made his Ummah the best of humankind, for they follow by Allah's Book, which guides them on all the issues that caused other communities to disagree among themselves and splinter into diverse communities. The Muslims are the moderate middle-ground Ummah in their strictly monotheistic faith in Allah and their belief in all His prophets, scriptures, and commandments. Their faith specifies what is permissible and what is not. It orders them to do good deeds and stay away from evil. Their faith has made all good things permissible and all evil things forbidden, unlike the Jews who have forbidden the good things that Allah made permissible, and the Christians who have made permissible the evil things that Allah has forbidden."⁽²⁾

(1) This statement is in reference to the hadith where the Prophet PBUH was asked "Who are these?" He said, "Those are the ones who evoked Allah's anger" as he pointed to the Jews. He was asked, "Who are those?" He said "Those are the ones who have gone astray," meaning the Christians. The hadith is narrated via Ahmed (sound; 20736) and Al-Albani (corrected; 3263).

(2) See *The Correct Response to those who Altered the Religion of the Messiah* by Ibn Taymiyah, edited by Ali Bin Hassan et. Al., Riyadh: Dar Al-`Asima, (1/69-70). Also see *Fiqh Al-Wasā'iyya Al-Islāmiyya wal-Tajdīd*, Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 2012, 50-52.

The other sense of the expression “the middle-ground Ummah” is the idea of a community. This Ummah is not favored for any reason inherent to them, but only because Allah has chosen this community to receive His universal message, which is intended to reach all corners of the world and to all people regardless of their race: “You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 3:110). The people of this Ummah are entrusted to spread Islam among themselves and to resist paganism, polytheism, and atheism. This is what the Prophet (PBUH) was ordered to say in the verse: “Say, ‘This is my way; I invite to Allah with insight, I and those who follow me. And exalted is Allah; and I am not of those who associate others with Him’” (Holy Qur’an, 12:108). This is why Allah has chosen this community to receive His Book, which Allah describes as the “Criterion” in the verse “Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His servant that he may be to the worlds a warner” (Holy Qur’an, 25:1). This verse also explains the mission of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH): to be a mercy to the worlds: “We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds” (Holy Qur’an, 21:107).

In summary, it is Allah who has created this Ummah and made it what it is, a unified community with a unified objective: “Indeed this, your Ummah, one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me” (Holy Qur’an, 21:92), and “Indeed this, your Ummah, one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so fear Me” (Holy Qur’an, 23:52). This is why it is inaccurate to describe the Ummah in the plural. The truth is that there are different peoples who belong to the one Ummah. Scholars, intellectuals, and all concerned parties are urged to work accordingly.

The Muslim Ummah’s Responsibility Toward Humanity

Allah Almighty has made it the responsibility of the Muslim Ummah, out of their faith and commitment to Islamic principles, to call on all people to Islam, so that they would be in peace: “Oh, you who have believed, enter into peace completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy” (Holy Qur’an, 2:208). In calling on people to join in faith, the Ummah does not seek money, power, or any worldly outcomes. Rather, the Ummah seeks to fulfill the duty to guide people toward what is good for them, for it is not acceptable for one person to be blessed and do nothing to help others who are deprived from the blessings and living in spiritual starvation and darkness. One cannot live in peace, while others are tormented with anxiety and doubt. It is very difficult for those who live in the light to see others lost in the dark screaming from their pains, while all they have to do is find the light switch and turn it on: “Is one who walks fallen on his face better guided, or one who walks erect on a straight path?” (Holy Qur’an, 67:22).

The Holy Qur'an As The Greatest Guide To The Middle Ground

The Glorious Holy Qur'an is our source for knowledge about true Islam, its belief system, and acts of worship. It is also our guide to peace, ethics and justice as individuals, families, communities, and nation states. From the Holy Qur'an, we learn that all Allah's prophets invited people to the middle ground. Allah says: "We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice" (Holy Qur'an, 57:25). The Prophet's Sunnah is our guide to the Holy Qur'an, as it explains its verses, gives examples, and provides details: "We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought" (Holy Qur'an, 16:44).

The Sunnah clearly rejects religious extremism, as in the case of the Prophet's companions who went too far in their religious practices: "Three men were bragging about how they follow the Prophet's Sunnah. One said: 'I will pray throughout the night for the rest of my life'. Another said: 'I will fast throughout the year and will not break my fast'. A third said: 'I will keep away from women and will never get married'. The Prophet (PBUH) came to them and said: 'Are you the same people who said so-and-so? By Allah Almighty, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast; I pray and go to sleep; and I also marry women. Whoever does not follow my tradition in religion, is not one of my followers'."⁽¹⁾ In this hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) resists the tendency of some people to be hard on themselves in prayers, fasting, remembering Allah, and reading the Holy Qur'an beyond what is prescribed. These are cases where people would engage in excessive acts of worship that come at the expense of their families and the community. The Prophet (PBUH) rejected extremism in favor of justice and balance. When Abdullah Ibn Amr spent most of his time worshipping, the Prophet (PBUH) said to him: "Your body has a right on you, your eyes have a right on you, your wife has a right on you, and your guests have a right on you."⁽²⁾ In Another version, he added: "Do right by all of them."⁽³⁾ In the same fashion, the Prophet (PBUH) reprimanded those who chose to fast and pray while traveling because they have permission not to.

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (5063) and Muslim (1401), both in their respective chapters on marriage.

(2) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1159), both in their respective chapters on fasting.

(3) Narrated via Abi Juhayfah Al-Sawaa'i by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on fasting (1968), and Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on asceticism (2413).

The Indication Of The Word “Al-Qasd” On The Term “Middle Ground” In The Sunnah

The Arabic word وسط (pronounced *wasat*) appears in the Sunnah texts only in contexts that explain the verse “Thus, we have made you a just community” (Holy Qur’an, 2:143), where the word *just* is used as a translation for وسط. However, the concept of the “middle ground” is referred to by another word, namely القصد (pronounced *al-qasd*) which means “being moderate”. This term occurs in the Holy Qur’an in the context of Luqman advising his son: “Be moderate in your pace” (31:19). In this verse, Luqman advises his son to be moderate in the way he walks, not too fast or too slow. In a similar context, the Prophet (PBUH) saw a man spending too much time worshipping. He said: “Religion is very easy, but whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue”⁽¹⁾ and he repeated it three times. Jabir Ibn Samura said: “I used to pray with the Prophet, May Allah’s peace be upon him. His prayers were moderate, and so were his sermons.”⁽²⁾ In other words, they were neither too long that people would be bored, nor too short to be inadequate.

The idea of moderation applies to all aspects of life, such as moderation between poverty and excessive wealth, as in the Prophet’s (PBUH) prayer “I ask You to make me moderate in times of wealth and poverty.”⁽³⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also says: “Three traits will ruin you: obeying yourself in stinginess, following your desires, and being vain; but three traits can save you: fearing Allah in private and in public, being between poverty and wealth, and telling the truth when happy and when angry.”⁽⁴⁾

Al-Hafidh Ibn Rajab’s View On Moderation

The Prophet (PBUH) summarizes the idea of moderation in his hadith: “Do good deeds properly, sincerely and moderately, and worship Allah in the morning, in the afternoon, and for a part of the night; and always adopt a middle, moderate, regular course whereby you will reach your target (Paradise)”⁽⁵⁾ Al-Hafidh Ibn Rajab offers a detailed analysis of this hadith in his treatise *Al-Mahajja fī Sayr Al-Dulja (The Destination for Night Walking)*. He argues that of all acts of worshipping which Allah loves most are those performed properly, sincerely and

(1) Narrated via Abi Barza Al-Aslami by Ahmed (sound; 19786) and Ibn Abi Assim (97).

(2) Narrated by Muslim (866), Ahmed (20885), Al-Tirmidhi (507), and Al-Nassa’i (1418).

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 18325) and Al-Nassa’i (1305).

(4) Narrated by Al-Bazzar (6491), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat*, and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi’ Al-Ṣaghīr* (3039).

(5) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on softening the hearts, Ahmed in his chapter on faith (10677), and Al-Nassa’i also in his chapter on faith (5034).

moderately, i.e., without making them complicated, excessive, or burdensome. Allah says: "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" (Holy Qur'an, 2:185); "Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you" (Holy Qur'an, 5:6); and "He has chosen you and has not placed upon you any difficulty in religion" (Holy Qur'an, 22:78).

There are several hadiths that focus on this theme. The Prophet said: "Facilitate things to people (concerning religious matters), and do not make it hard for them."⁽¹⁾ He also said: "You have been sent to make things easy and not to make them difficult."⁽²⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) was once asked: "Which religion is dearest to Allah?" He answered: "The tolerant Hanifiyya [natural monotheism]."⁽³⁾ Mihjin Ibn Al-Adra' reports that the Prophet walked into the mosque one day and saw a man praying. The Prophet wondered: "Is he being truthful?" Someone responded in defense of the man: "Oh Allah's Prophet, this is so-and-so. He is one of the best people in Medina, and he prays more than anyone else." The Prophet said: "Do not let him hear you say that. It might ruin him", and he repeated this phrase two or three times, then added: "You are an Ummah meant for moderation."⁽⁴⁾ In another version, he added: "The best of your religion is the most moderate"⁽⁵⁾ and in a third: "You will not reach your goal (paradise) by fighting with yourselves."⁽⁶⁾ Hamid Ibn Zanjawayh listed the same hadith, but added: "You are required to take upon yourselves only what you can carry out easily. By Allah, Allah does not withhold His mercy and forgiveness of you until you neglect and give up (good works). Follow a middle course in worship. If you cannot do this, do something close to it and give glad tidings and seek Allah's help by praying in the morning, at dusk and, and during part of the night."

To summarize, the Prophet rejected all excessive acts of worship, such as praying all night long, fasting every day, taking vows of celibacy, and reading the entire Holy Qur'an every night. He reprimanded some of his companions, namely Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-As, Uthman Ibn Madhun, and Al-Miqdad, among others who engaged in such excessive acts. He said to them: "By Allah, I am more submissive to Allah and more afraid of Him than you; yet I fast and break my fast, I do sleep, and I also marry women. Whoever does not follow my tradition in religion, is not one of my followers."⁽⁷⁾ As a result, Abdullah Ibn Amr,

(1) Narrated via Anas by Al-Bukhari in this chapter on knowledge (69) and Muslim in his chapters on jihad and biographies (1734).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on ablution (221), Ahmed (7255), Abu Dawud (380), Al-Tirmidhi (147), and Al-Nassa'i (56).

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (2107), and Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (287).

(4) Narrated by Ahmed (20347).

(5) Narrated by Ahmed (20349).

(6) Narrated via Ibn Al-Adra' by Ahmed (weak; 18971), Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (sound; 15982).

(7) Narrated via Anas by Al-Bukhari (5063) and Muslim (1401), both in the respective chapters on marriage.

who used to the read the entire Holy Qur'an every night, started reading it over seven days, or three in some versions. He followed the Prophet's advice: "He who recites the Holy Qur'an in less than three days does not understand it."⁽¹⁾ As for fasting and night prayers, the Prophet said: "The prayers which are dearest to Allah are those of Dawud (David); and the fasting which is dearest to Allah is also that of Dawud (David). He would sleep half the night, get up to pray for one-third of it, then sleep through the remaining one-sixth of it; and he used to fast every other day."⁽²⁾

The Sunnah's Rejection Of Excess

Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Shibl narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Recite the Holy Qur'an and act according to it, but do not go into excess in reciting it, do not desert it, and do not make money using it."⁽³⁾ Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari reported that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "It is out of reverence to Allah in respecting the elderly Muslims, and those who commit the Holy Qur'an to memory and do not exaggerate pronouncing its letters nor forget it after memorizing, and to respect the just ruler."⁽⁴⁾

International And Human Acquaintance

Another objective of Islamic ethics is to promote humanistic interaction among all people and nations: "Oh mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted" (Holy Qur'an, 49:13). This verse is a call on all people, Muslims and non-Muslims, to remember that there is only one Allah, and that His oneness is the reason for their unity. If people were created by different creators, they would have inherent conflicts among the different groups. They were all created the same way "from male and female". In other words, we are all the children of Adam and Eve. Then, people broke into different groups that

(1) Narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (sound; 6535), Abu Dawud in his chapter on praying (1394), Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on reciting the Holy Qur'an (sound; 2949), and Ibn Majah in his chapter on praying (1347).

(2) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on the benefits of reciting the Holy Qur'an (5052) and Muslim in his chapter on fasting (1159) and see *Al-Mahajja fi Sayr Al-Dulja (The Destination for Night Walking): An Anthology of Ibn Rajab's Treatises (4/410-411)*, edited by Talat Al-Halawani. Cairo: Al-Farūq Al-Ḥaditha lil-Ṭibā'a Wal-Nashr, 2004.

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 15529), Abu Ya'la (1518), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (2574), and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (6445).

(4) Narrated by Abu Dawud in his chapter on manners (4843), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (357), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (274). Also see *Fiqh Al-Wasaṭiyya Al-Islāmiyya*, Pages 66-67.

spread across the world, which the Holy Qur'an refers to as "peoples and tribes". This diversity is not meant to cause conflict. Rather, this diversity is a motivation for people to "know one another". This bond between people should be based on collaboration on good deeds and sharing resources. Every group needs to bare their share of the responsibility by serving themselves and others as Abu Al-`Alaa' Al-Ma`arri writes:

People to people, whether in the city or in the desert

Are servants to each other, even if they do not know it.

What people need to understand is that they share their humanity; there is no race or ethnic group that is better in any way than another. Islam establishes equality among all people on two principles: (a) they are all created by the one Allah who also created the whole universe and provides them with what they need, and (b) all people, regardless of their race, come from Adam and Eve. Equality is also established in the Prophet's Farewell Sermon, which he gave at his only *Hajj* to over 100,000 of his followers. He said: "Oh people, your Allah is but one, and your father is but one. You are all from Adam, and Adam is from dust. There is no preference for an Arab over a non-Arab, and there is no preference for a white person over a black one. The only preference is for those who are Allah-conscious."⁽¹⁾ In this international declaration, which was also the concluding remarks of the Prophet's (PBUH) message, the Prophet (PBUH) gave his last will and final testimony. He told those present that he might not be with them after that year, and reminded them to protect people's lives, property, and honor; to be kind to women; and to be generous to those their right hands possess. On that day while the Prophet (PBUH) was on the Mount Arafah, Allah revealed the verse: "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion. But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 5:3). A Jew heard that verse recited by some Muslims. He said: "If this verse was revealed about us, we would have made that day a religious holiday." Omar, May Allah be Pleased with Him, responded, "I know exactly where it was revealed. It was revealed while the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, was on Mount Arafah."⁽²⁾

Peace As The Norm For Humanity

We are calling for an Ummah that takes the Farewell Sermon as its point of departure, an Ummah that would call upon all people, regardless of race, social class, or ethnicity, to a unified humanity. This humanity shares one Allah and one father,

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 3489) and Al-Haythami (3/586).

(2) Narrated via Tariq Ibn Shihab by Al-Bukhari (4407) and Muslim (3017).

and shares a common belief in Allah's books, including the Christian and Jewish books. There is no doubt in my mind that all people share the belief that all people are equal, even if they do not believe in the one Allah or the one father.

Islam establishes peace as the normal condition for all of humanity: "Oh you who have believed, enter into peace completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy" (Holy Qur'an, 2:208). Just as the faithful are ordered to live in peace, everyone else is also expected to live in peace. Nobody should follow Satan's path, because he promotes evil, starts conflicts, and adds fuel to the fire to start wars. It is Satan who sends droves of people to their graves every day, murdered at the hands of their fellow humans, who, in the end, realize that they have achieved nothing by waging war.

Islam invites people to choose a better way to live, to be free to believe in a religion of their choice, to let others choose a religion for themselves without coercion or manipulation, and to cooperate among each other. People can inform others about their religion, but only with kind words, rational arguments, and role models. Allah says: "Allah repelled those who disbelieved, in their rage, not having obtained any good. And sufficient was Allah for the believers in battle, and ever is Allah Powerful and Exalted in Might" (Holy Qur'an, 33:25). In this verse, Allah considers withholding fighting and avoiding war a blessing that the faithful should be grateful for. This is a clear indication that Allah does not like to see bloodshed, unless it is the blood of those who kill people unjustly and spread corruption.

1.4 Methods Of Achieving The Objectives Of Ethics in Islam

Islam presents a series of moral objectives for us to strive to achieve. It also provides the means to achieve these objectives. Otherwise, it would be impossible to realize such lofty goals, as Al-Abbas Ibn Al-Ahnaf writes:

*As the sun presides over the sky,
Console your heart, for it is too high.
You can never ascend to get close,
And it could not descend, even if it so chose.*

For each moral objective, be it spiritual or materialistic, individual or social, Islam provides clearly defined ways that help us achieve it.

A. A Role Model For Humanity

Another distinctive feature of Islamic ethics is that it comes with the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah, an unprecedented, well-documented, and practical role model. It constitutes a comprehensive model with examples for all life experiences, including childhood, youth, married life (both monogamous and polygamous), times of peace and war, victory and defeat, health and sickness, joy and sadness, poverty and wealth, and other types of life experiences, right up until death. Thus, Islamic ethics is not platonic, offering theoretical and idealistic teachings and noble ideas. It is a moral system with real life applications, represented in the life of an individual who lived on earth in real time, ate food, and walked in the markets. The Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was not a Allah, a demi-god, a son of Allah, a member of a divine trinity, a descendant of Gods, or a human body inhabited by divine spirit. He was nothing but a mortal man. He was a man who mended his own shoes, patched his own clothes, milked his own sheep, mingled with people from all social classes, and lived among people like one of them. During the Battle of Badr he took turns with his companions to ride a camel. When his companions offered to let him ride all the time, he refused and took his turn to walk instead, even though he was over 50 years old and they were young healthy men. He said to them: "You are no stronger than I am, and I am not in less need for Allah's reward than you."⁽¹⁾ In short, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was a normal person, distinguished only by receiving divine revelations from Allah. These revelations would guide him when he needed guidance, show him the right way if he made

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Ahmed (good; 3901), Al-Nassa'i in *Al-Kubrā*, Ibn Hibban (4733), Al-Hakim in his chapter in *jihad* (corrected; 2/91), and Al-Albani in *Al-Shāḥiḥa* (2257).

a mistake, remind him if he forgot, give him strength when he needed, and illuminate as an eternal light that never extinguished: “He to whom Allah has not granted light - for him there is no light” (Holy Qur’an, 24:40). Allah ordered him to explain his mortality to people: “Say, ‘I am only a man like you, to whom has been revealed that your Allah is one Allah’” (Holy Qur’an, 18:110).

The Man Chosen To Serve As The Role Model

The role model is Mohammed Ibn Abdillaah, whom Allah has chosen to deliver His message to humanity and to perfect morality. Allah addresses the faithful regarding His prophets: “There has certainly been for you in them an excellent pattern for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day” (Holy Qur’an, 60:6). He also draws their attention to the Prophet’s (PBUH) function as a role model: “There has certainly been for you in the Messenger of Allah an excellent example for anyone whose hope is in Allah and the Last Day and [who] remembers Allah often” (Holy Qur’an, 33:21). Allah has made the Prophet’s (PBUH) life a living example to be followed by everyone, regardless of race, age, social status, and class. Every person on earth can find guidance in the Prophet’s (PBUH) life, which serves a wealth of lessons and examples of righteous behavior. Unlike the preceding prophets, who served as role models in certain aspects of their lives or whose messages were addressed to particular communities and time periods, Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) has been sent with a universal message for all of humanity until the end of time.

In summary, Prophet Mohammed’s (PBUH) life offers examples for everyone in different situations. He was an example of a healthy young man who could not afford to get married, but he used to avert his eyes and would not even consider disobeying Allah. Rather, he waited until he got married to fulfill his sexual needs. As a married man, he was a role model of the good husband who makes sure all his wife’s rights are recognized, and a role model of the good father and grandfather. When he lived in hardship and poverty, he was patient and worked diligently waiting for Allah to improve his situation. He was happy with whatever he had and never wanted to earn a living from forbidden sources. When he became wealthy, he did not forget to be grateful for what Allah gave him, and he made sure he gave the poor their rights. In times of peace, he lived in peace and stayed true to the terms of his agreements. In times of war, he fought on the front lines. Whenever there was a chance to make peace, he did not hesitate and even considered peace-making a victory as Allah taught him in the Hudaibiya Accord. When he served as a ruler, he established justice and never wronged any individual, family, tribe, or community. He lived among all of them in harmony: “We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds” (Holy Qur’an, 21:107).

B. Continuous Education

Education is one of the greatest blessings Allah has given the Ummah of Mohammed (PBUH). Education is a core issue in Islam, because it is the only way to learn about ethics from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet whom Allah described as kind and merciful: "There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 9:128). Allah has made this message a mercy to all people, and He even introduced Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in the Torah and the Bible as the one whom "they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them" (Holy Qur'an, 7:157).

The Prophet (PBUH) was sent to serve as an educator: "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom, although they were before in clear error" (Holy Qur'an, 62:2). This theme occurs in the Holy Qur'an four times to stress that the Prophet (PBUH) serves in three main functions:

1. **To recite Allah's words.** These are the revelations that Allah has sent to His prophets, and it is their duty to relate the message to people. This way, Allah's message reaches people to let them know what He wants them to do and not do in this world. Allah says: "These are the verses of Allah. We recite them to you, [Oh, Mohammed], in truth; and Allah wants no injustice to the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 3:108) and "These are the verses of Allah which We recite to you in truth. Then in what statement after Allah and His verses will they believe?" (Holy Qur'an, 45:6). In other contexts, Allah addresses His Prophet (PBUH) and commands him directly: "Recite, [Oh, Mohammed], what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no changer of His words, and never will you find in other than Him a refuge" (Holy Qur'an, 18:27), "Recite, [Oh, Mohammed], what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish prayer" (Holy Qur'an, 29:45), and "Say, 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you'" Holy Qur'an, 6:151).
2. **To purify the Ummah.** A prophet has the duty of purifying his ummah. Purifying here means spiritual cleansing and developing good moral character. For example, a prophet helps people purify themselves from the polytheism, hypocrisy, and other evils. Then, he helps them build their moral character with true faith, genuine monotheism, honesty, and other good moral traits. Allah says: "He has certainly succeeded who purifies himself" (Holy Qur'an, 87:14), and "He has succeeded who purifies it [the soul]"

(Holy Qur'an, 91:9). Allah also commands Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) to "Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase" (Holy Qur'an, 9:103). This is why Muslims pray to Allah: "Oh Allah! Grant me the sense of piety and purify my soul, as You are the Best to purify it. You are its Guardian and its Protecting Friend."⁽¹⁾

3. **To teach the Book and wisdom.** A prophet teaches Allah's book, whether it is the revelations he receives or the ones received by previous prophets: "Allah has revealed to you the Book and wisdom and has taught you that which you did not know. And ever has the favor of Allah upon you been great" (Holy Qur'an, 4:113). In addition to relating the texts that Allah reveals, a prophet is entrusted with explaining the content of those texts, such as the acts of worship, the creeds, social interactions, and ethics. Prophets are also teachers of wisdom. Allah says: "He gives wisdom to whom He wills, and whoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good" (Holy Qur'an, 2:269). Allah also praises Luqman in the Holy Qur'an: "We had certainly given Luqman wisdom [and said]: 'Be grateful to Allah'" (31:12). Finally, it is important to distinguish two types of wisdom: theoretical wisdom and practical wisdom. Theoretical wisdom is knowledge about the true nature of things, which is known only to wise people with special insights. Practical wisdom is the ability to evaluate things accurately. A wise person does not underestimate things, no matter how small or insignificant; it is an appreciation of quality over quantity and content over appearance.

It is very important for the Ummah to learn wisdom and teach it to the new generations. This requires educational curricula that teach young Muslims their creed, ethics, and social interactions. These curricula need highly qualified men and women who believe in their mission to enlighten the hearts and minds of the youths. May Ahmed Shawqi, the Egyptian poet, rest in peace, for he writes:

Stand up in respect for your teacher,

For a teacher is almost a prophet.

Have you ever seen a man who is greater

Than someone who fills hearts and minds with light?

C. Preaching, Encouraging, And Warning

Other methods of achieving the objectives of Islamic ethics include inviting people to Islam, preaching to them, encouraging them to do good deeds, and warning them about the consequences of doing evil. This is a continuation of the role of

(1) Narrated via Zayd Ibn Al-Arqam by Muslim in his chapter on prayers (2722) and Ahmed (19308).

Allah's messengers and walking in their footsteps. By inviting people to faith, we bring them good tidings about Allah's rewards in this life and in the afterlife, and we call on them to spread beauty and goodness in the world. It is an invitation to salvation and protection from the torments of hellfire. In contrast, we warn people that steering away from the truth, justice, and ethics has dire consequence, for it evokes Allah's anger and brings down His wrath. Just like Allah generously rewards the faithful, He punishes the disbelievers and those who follow their path. Allah said to His last prophet: "Oh Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness, and as a bringer of good tidings, and as a warning. Also as one who invites to Allah, by His permission, as an illuminating lamp, and who gives good tidings to the believers, that they will have from Allah great bounty" (Holy Qur'an, 33:45-47).

Scholars As The Heirs Of The Prophets

Scholars are considered the heirs of the prophets, for they follow in their footsteps and deliver their message to people: "Who is better in speech than one who invites Allah and does righteousness and says: 'Indeed, I am one of the Muslims'" (Holy Qur'an, 41:33). Allah addresses the Prophet (PBUH) and everyone who can speak on behalf of the Ummah: "Invite them to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 16:125). In this verse, Allah specifies the manner of inviting people to the straight path; one invites educated people by engaging with them in intellectual dialogue, and those with less education with kind words of advice. These are the strategies for inviting agreeable people, but there are those whom we are commanded to "argue with them in a way that is best." Those are people who like to engage in futile arguments and manipulative debate. When engaging with such people, there are two peaceful strategies, and we are ordered to adopt the better one.

The Holy Qur'an offers kind advice to people whose hearts would listen. Allah says, "Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing" (4:58), and "Oh mankind, there has to come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the chests and guidance and mercy for the believers. Say, 'In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate'" (10:57-58). In the commentary on the Battle of Uhud and its martyrs, Allah says: "This [Holy Qur'an] is a clear statement to [all] the people and a guidance and instruction for those conscious of Allah. So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers" (Holy Qur'an, 3:138-139). Allah also says: "[Oh Prophet, Say, 'I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought'" (Holy Qur'an, 34:46). In this verse, Allah advises people to engage in the pursuit of His

truth and think alone or in pairs with trusted people, and to stay away from collective thinking and actions, where people can be lost in the group mentality and follow blindly.

The Holy Qur'an also offers advice concerning the best moral traits: "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives and forbids immorality and bad conduct and oppression. He admonishes you that perhaps you will be reminded" (16:90). In the context of the Ifk incident where a non-believer spread rumors and false accusations about the Prophet's (PBUH) wife, Allah says: "Allah warns you against returning to the likes of this [conduct] ever, if you should be believers. And Allah makes clear to you the verses, and Allah is Knowing and Wise" (24:17-18). With regard to the hypocrites who claim to be Muslims, but they believe otherwise, Allah says, "Those are the ones of whom Allah knows what is in their hearts, so turn away from them, but admonish them and speak to them a far-reaching word" (4:63), and "If We had decreed upon them, "Kill yourselves" or "Leave your homes", they would not have done it, except for a few of them. But if they had done what they were instructed, it would have been better for them and a firmer position [for them in faith]" (4:63), and "if they had done what they were instructed, it would have been better for them and a firmer position [for them in faith]. And then We would have given them from Us a great reward. And We would have guided them to a straight path" (Holy Qur'an, 4:66-68).

The Holy Qur'an explains in various contexts how advice can be useful to people and how it can help redirect their behavior. For example, Allah says: "Whoever has received an admonition from his Lord and desists may have what is past, and his affair rests with Allah. But whoever returns to [dealing in interest or usury] - those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein" (Holy Qur'an, 2:275), and "We have certainly sent down to you distinct verses and examples from those who passed on before you and an admonition for those who fear Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 24:34). Sometimes, the Holy Qur'an offers a complete text with advice, such as the words of wisdom Luqman preached to his son: "Oh my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination. And do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone self-deluded and boastful. And be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys" (Holy Qur'an, 31:17-19), and "That is instructed to whoever of you believes in Allah and the Last Day. That is better for you and purer, and Allah knows and you know not" (Holy Qur'an, 2:232).

The Holy Qur'an uses two main strategies to offer advice to people. The first is bringing good tidings by providing information about the rewards Allah bestows in this world and in the afterlife upon the faithful who heed the call, believe in Allah,

and behave accordingly. For example, the Holy Qur'an states: "Indeed, those who have said 'Our Lord is Allah' and then remained on a right course - they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. Those are the companions of Paradise, abiding eternally therein as reward for what they used to do" (Holy Qur'an, 46:13-14), and "Oh My servants who have believed, fear your Lord. For those who do good in this world are good, and the earth of Allah is spacious. Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account" (Holy Qur'an, 39:10). Allah has promised the faithful to be generous to them in this world, facilitate their affairs, and give them wealth and children. This is a promise that goes back to Noah who said: "Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers and give you increased wealth, and children, and provide for you gardens and provide for you rivers" (Holy Qur'an, 71:10-12). Allah's rewards to the faithful are a recurrent theme in Holy Qur'an, they are mentioned in numerous verses, such as "If only they upheld [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and that which has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them are moderates, but many of them are evil in that which they do" (Holy Qur'an, 5:66), and "If they had remained on the straight path, We would have given them abundant provision" (Holy Qur'an, 72:16).

This strategy is also combined with stern warnings about the dire consequences of not believing in Allah and not staying on the straight path. While many verses tell people about the peace and bliss in Paradise, such as no eye has ever seen, nor ear ever heard, nor mind ever imagined, other verses talk of great punishments, the most painful of which is being denied direct communication with Allah: "No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned" (Holy Qur'an, 83:15), and "Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit to the Fire - You have disgraced him, and for the wrongdoers there are no helpers" (Holy Qur'an, 3:192).

Some Advices From The Sunnah And Prophetic Stories

The Sunnah follows the same strategies of offering advice, encouragement, and warnings. For example, Al-'Arbad Ibn Sariyya narrates: "One day the Prophet, Peace be upon Him, gave a moving sermon that made our eyes flow with tears and our hearts soften."⁽¹⁾ Such sermons provide an invaluable treasury of stories and parables that teach people about their religion, such as the story of the three men who were in a cave when a landslide blocked the entrance with a boulder, trapping them inside. They tried in vain to move it, but soon realized there was no escape from their inevitable end. The boulder slowly moved and unblocked the

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 17142), Abu Dawud (4607), and Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on science (2676).

entrance as each of them prayed to Allah and told of a good deed he had done with no intention other than pleasing Allah. Each one concluded his story with “Oh Allah! If You regard that I did this for Your sake, kindly remove this rock.”⁽¹⁾ There is also the story of the blind, the leper, and the bald. All three were afflicted with painful diseases, but Allah healed them for a while to test their intentions. The ones who were thankful and did righteous deeds stayed healthy, but the one who was ungrateful and did evil deeds was punished when he relapsed.⁽²⁾

A similar tale tells the story of a man who murdered 99 people, but whose conscience was then moved, and he decided to repent. He needed someone to help him repent and change his ways, and someone suggested that he go to a certain monk. He went to the monk, but the monk said: “There is no mercy for the likes of you.” The man became angry and killed the monk, but his heart was still seeking Allah’s forgiveness. He asked around for the most knowledgeable of all scholars. People sent him to a pious scholar who told him that there is always hope in Allah’s mercy, but he needed to leave the evil village where he committed all those sins and move to a righteous village that the scholar named. The man took the scholar’s advice to heart, packed his belongings, and headed for the new village, but he died on the way. The angels disagreed among themselves as to what to do with him; the angels of mercy wanted to take him because he intended to join the righteous community, while the angels of punishment wanted to take him because he never made it to that community. In the end, Allah intervened and the man was saved by Allah’s mercy.⁽³⁾

There are numerous similar stories in different Sunnah texts but they are yet to be collected in one anthology for people’s benefit.

The Holy Qur’an Uses Stories For Calling

The Holy Qur’an also uses stories and parables to bring people good tidings, to warn them, and to help strengthen their faith. These include the stories of the prophets: “And each [story] We relate to you from the news of the messengers is that by which We make firm your heart. And there has come to you, in this, the truth and an instruction and a reminder for the believers” (Holy Qur’an, 11:120), and “Those who disbelieve say, ‘Why was the Holy Qur’an not revealed to him all at once?’ Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (2215) in his chapter on business interactions (2215) and Muslim in his chapter on prayers and the remembrance of Allah (2743).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on the Prophets’ parables (3464) and Muslim in his chapter on asceticism.

(3) Narrated via Abu Sa’id Al-Khudari by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on the Prophets’ parables (3470) and Muslim on repentance (2766).

spaced it distinctly. And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the truth and the best explanation” (Holy Qur’an, 25:32-33).

In addition to the stories of the prophets, the Holy Qur’an offers several stories about the faithful, such as the stories of the Virgin Mary, the unnamed faithful man in the Chapter of Yasin, the Pharaoh’s wife, the faithful man in the Pharaoh’s community, the faithful martyrs, and Dhu Al-Qarnayn, among others. There are also stories in the Holy Qur’an that are meant to serve as warnings, such as the story in the Chapter of the Cave: “And present to them the example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops ...” (Holy Qur’an, 18:32). All these stories and parables serve as reminders, lessons, and warnings that touch people’s hearts and inspire their minds: “And remind them, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers” (Holy Qur’an, 51:55).⁽¹⁾

Examples From The Sunnah

The Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah also offers many examples that serve the same functions as parables and stories, including the following:

- *“The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are like one body. If one part suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever.”⁽²⁾*
- *“Those who remember Allah and those who do not are like the living and the dead.”⁽³⁾*
- *“The likeness of the heart is that of a feather blown about by the wind in a desert.”⁽⁴⁾*
- *“He who gives something (to someone) as a gift and then takes it back is like a dog which eats its own vomit.”⁽⁵⁾*
- *“Those who keep good company and those who keep bad company are like those who keep the company of the musk seller and the blacksmith. The musk seller would either offer you some or you would buy it from him. At least, you*

(1) For more information, see *Al-Taṣwīr Al-Fannī fī Al-Qur’ān* (The Stylistics of Imagery in the Qur’an).

(2) Narrated via Al-Nu`man Ibn Bashir by Al-Bukhari (6011) and Muslim (2586).

(3) Narrated via Abu Musa by Al-Bukhari in his section on supplications and prayers (6407), and Muslim on praying while traveling (779).

(4) Narrated via Abu Musa by Ibn Majah in his introduction (88) and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (corrected; 71).

(5) Narrated via Abu Musa by Al-Bukhari (2589) and Muslim (1622), both in their respective chapters on gifts.

would smell its pleasant fragrance. As for the blacksmith, he either burns your clothes or you smell the repugnant smell of his burning coals.”⁽¹⁾

- “The parable of my Ummah is that of rain; it is not known which is better, its beginning or its end.”⁽²⁾

One can find over 53 hadiths (sound and good; 5825-5860) in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmic Al-Ṣaghīr* by Al-Albani and its appendices.

Examples From The Holy Qur'an

The examples that occur in the Sunnah follow the patterns of examples in the Holy Qur'an.⁽³⁾ For example, Allah says:

- “The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah and then did not take it up is like that of a donkey which carries volumes [of books]. Wretched is the example of the people who deny the signs of Allah. And Allah does not guide the people of wrongdoing” (Holy Qur'an, 62:5).
- “The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts, yet hears nothing but the call and cry of cattle or sheep - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand” (Holy Qur'an, 2:171).
- “The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills” (Holy Qur'an, 2:261).
- “The example of what they spend in this worldly life is like that of a wind containing frost which strikes the harvest of a people who have wronged themselves, and destroys it. And Allah has not wronged them, but they wrong themselves” (Holy Qur'an, 3:117).

(1) Narrated via Abu Musa by Al-Bukhari (2101), Muslim (2628), Ahmed (19660), and Abu Dawud (4259).

(2) Narrated via Anas by Ahmed (sound; 12461, 18881) and Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on parables (2869); via Ammar by Al-Tayalisi (682) and Ibn Hibban in his chapter on the merits of the Prophet's companions; via Ali by Abu Ya'la in *Al-Jāmi' Al-Kabīr* by Al-Suyuti (11042), via Ibn Omar by Al-Tabarani (13/274) and Abu Nuaym in *Al-Hilya* (2/231); and via Ibn Amr by Ibn Bashran in his *Amālī* (982).

(3) The examples in the Holy Qur'an have been the theme of several books such as *Al-Amthāl min Al-Qur'an wal-Sunnah* (Examples from the Qur'an and the Sunnah) by Al-Hakim Al-Tirmidhi and *Al-Amthāl fī Al-Qur'an* (The Examples of the Qur'an) by Ibn Al-Qayyim.

Holy Qur'anic Verses That Deliver Preaching, Persuasion, Good Tidings And Warnings

Throughout the Holy Qur'an, one finds verses in which Allah makes promises and offers praise, and other verses where He issues stern warnings and condemnation. These promises and praises aim to make believers look forward to being in heaven, while the warnings tell people about the angst and torments of hell. It is sufficient to closely read the last section of the Holy Qur'an to have one's heart and mind filled with desire to be with Allah in heaven and to be as far away as possible from what He has prepared for disbelievers. These verses immediately touch our hearts and fill them with light, for Allah says: "Has the time not come for those who have believed that their hearts should become humbly submissive at the remembrance of Allah and what has come down of the truth? And let them not be like those who were given the Scripture before, and a long period passed over them, so their hearts hardened" (Holy Qur'an, 57:16).

On The Prophet's Contextualized Sermons

All of the Prophet's sermons were spontaneous and contextualized, as he gave them whenever the situation called for one. For example, Jabir Ibn Abdullah reports that the Prophet (PBUH) happened to walk through the market one day along with some of his companions. They passed by a dead lamb with very short ears. He said: "Who among you would like to have this [dead lamb] for a dirham?" They said: "We would not like to have it even for less than that, for it is of no use to us." He asked: "Do you wish to have it (free of any cost)?" They answered: "By Allah, even if it were alive we would not like to have it, for it is defective; now it is dead too." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "By Allah, this world is more insignificant in the eyes of Allah than this [dead lamb] is in your eyes."⁽¹⁾ This teachable moment could not have come at a better time or in a more suitable context. Al-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and others report a similar context where the Prophet (PBUH) said: "If this world was worth the wing of a mosquito to Allah, He would not let the disbelievers have a drop of water to drink."⁽²⁾ Al-Mustawrid Akhi Bani Fihri narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) also said: "In comparison with the Hereafter, this world is like the amount of water one gets when dipping a finger in the ocean. See how much water it holds [compared to the ocean]."⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his chapter on asceticism (2957), Ahmed (14930), and Abu Dawud on purity (186).

(2) Narrated via Sahl Ibn Sa'd by Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (sound; 2320), Ibn Majah, also on asceticism (4110), Al-Hakim (corrected; 4/306), and Al-Albani in *Al-Shaḥīḥa* (943).

(3) Narrated via Muslim in his chapter on heaven (2858), Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on asceticism (2323), and Ibn Majah, also on asceticism (4108).

Another example is the story of Abu Ubaidah when he brought back money from Bahrain. The Ansars of Medina were excited, hoping they would get a share of the wealth. When they joined the Prophet (PBUH) for the Fajr prayer, he said to them: "Rejoice and hope for that which will please you. By Allah, it is not poverty that I fear for you, but I fear that this world will open up to you with wealth as it did to those before you; and you may vie with one another over it as they did, and eventually it will ruin you, as it ruined them."⁽¹⁾ Abu Hurayrah reports that the Prophet (PBUH) said in a different context: "It is not poverty that I fear for you. What concerns me most is prosperity. I do not fear that you may err, but I fear you may err on purpose."⁽²⁾ Abu Sa'id Al-Khudari narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) was at the pulpit when he said: "What I fear for you is that the world will open up for you with riches after me."⁽³⁾ Abdullah Ibn Al-Shukhir narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not visit rich people too often, lest you feel contempt for what Allah has bestowed upon others."⁽⁴⁾

On The Opponents To Persuasion And Warnings

There are two main groups that oppose the idea of persuasion and warning based on their understanding that action does not proceed from the interest in Allah's rewards or fear from His punishments.

The Philosophers

The first group includes some moral philosophers in general who separate ethics from religion and Allah, particularly among Idealists. This perspective calls for doing good for its own sake regardless of consequences, beneficial or harmful, without paying attention to persuasion or warning. These philosophers reject basing ethics on religion, because religion offers consequences and rewards, even if these rewards are in the afterlife.

The Extremist Sufis

The other group is that of some Sufi scholars who also denounce doing good and staying away from evil and obeyed Allah in hope of His Mercy or out of fear from

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on capitation and taxes (3158), Muslim on asceticism (2961), Ahmed (17234), Al-Tirmidhi in his chapter on the Day of Judgment (2462), and Ibn Majah on civil strife (3997).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (sound citing Muslim; 8074) and Al-Hakim in *Al-Tafsir* (corrected following Muslim and Al-Dhahabi; 2/534).

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1465) and Muslim (1052), both on *Zakat*.

(4) Narrated by Al-Hakim (sound citing Al-Dhahabi; 4/312) and Al-Bayhaqi on faith (9806). For more hadiths on these topics, please see Al-Qaradawi, *Al-Muntaqā min Kitāb Al-Targhib wal-Tahdhib lil-Mundhirī*, (2/376-404), Al-Maktab Al-Islāmī, 3rd edition, 2000.

His punishment, to attain His heaven and fear from hell. To them, one is supposed to do good without thinking of heaven or hell, as they often say: "Do not be like a bad servant who works only when scared of punishment, and do not be like a bad laborer for hire who does not work unless paid." Some such Sufis went as far as condemning those who pray, do charitable works, fast in Ramadan, go on pilgrimage to Mecca, and maintain strong family ties, etc. if these actions are motivated by the desire to be in heaven or out of fear of hell.

Both perspectives could not be further from the truth. Determinism, as well as the philosophical views of Kant and his followers, ignores human nature and the impact of reinforcement, positive or negative, on human behavior. It is true that some people can sometimes be genuine in their moral acts regardless of reward, but most people act morally only because of their hopes for reward or fears of punishment. Therefore, let people have hopes for Allah's rewards and fear of His punishment. For those who act morally, there are rewards in this world and the afterlife beyond materialistic benefits and immediate gratification. This is a form of freedom in and of itself, for people become free from materialism and basic desires: "Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting" (Holy Qur'an, 16:96). In the story of Moses and the Pharaoh, a faithful man from the Pharaoh's community said: "Oh my people, this worldly life is only [temporary] enjoyment, and indeed, the Hereafter - that is the home of [permanent] settlement. Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except by the like thereof; but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - those will enter Paradise, being given provision therein without account" (Holy Qur'an, 40:39-40).

The Idealist philosophers are concerned that people would act morally to serve their materialistic personal interests, because such interests weaken communities, since one person's interests might harm others. This might be a valid concern, but within Islam there is enough room for everyone to act morally in hopes of receiving Allah's boundless rewards, which are among the most powerful motivations for most people. Dr. Draz also addresses this issue, as he writes:

"There is often confusion between the reward associated with an action, or the outcome, and its motivation or intentions. This confusion sometimes leads people to think that all moral acts in Islam are motivated by the desire to receive rewards. While the Holy Qur'an offers numerous examples of rewards and punishments for all types of actions, good and evil, the ultimate goal is always the same, namely God. Thus, moral acts are spiritual acts done for their own sake, which we find in over a thousand verses in the Holy Qur'an in which people are urged to do righteous deeds regardless of their rewards. The generous rewards promised in the Holy Qur'an are only for those who act righteously for

Allah's sake, i.e., those who "come to Allah with a sound heart" (Holy Qur'an, 26:89) and "come with a heart returning [in repentance]" (Holy Qur'an, 50:33). The Prophet (PBUH) was once asked about fighting to protect one's community, to get a share of war booty, or to have a reputation for bravery. The Prophet (PBUH) said that none of these things are for Allah's sake: "He who fights for Allah's word to become Superior, is striving in Allah's Cause."⁽¹⁾

Unlike philosophers, Sufi scholars base their arguments on religion. I have already refuted the Sufis' claims in *Al-cibāda fī Al-Islām*⁽²⁾ (*Worshipping in Islam*), where I write: "The Sufis have condemned those who worship Allah in pursuit of His rewards or out of fear of His punishment." They describe worshipping Allah for these purposes as a form of opportunism which is inherently in contradiction with loving Allah. Moreover, Sufis claim that those who expect rewards actually think highly of their own acts of worship, and consequently, they think they are entitled to these rewards. For the Sufis, a person who loves Allah worships Him for no reason other than love, according to a saying attributed to Allah: "Had I not created heaven and hell, wouldn't I deserve to be worshipped?"⁽³⁾ We find similar themes in Sufi poetry, such as

*What if Allah never sent a prophet,
And the fires of Hell were never lit?
Wouldn't it be misguided
Not to worship Him who has provided?
And Rabi`a Al-Adawīyya's famous lines:
They all pray to You fearing the Fire;
And if You do not put them in the Fire,
This is their reward.
Or they pray to You for Your Heaven,
Full of fruits and flowers.
And that is their prize.
But I do not pray to You like this,
For I am not afraid of the Fire,*

(1) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ah`ari by Al-Buhkari on science (123) and Muslim on leadership (1904) and see *Kalimāt fī Mabādī' ʿilm Al-Akhlaq* (On the Principles of Moral Ethics), Page 38.

(2) This is the second book to be published by the author after his first book *Al-Ḥalāl wal-Ḥarām fī Al-Islām* (*The Permissible and the Forbidden in Islam*).

(3) Ibn Al-Qayyim notes in *Madārij Al-Sālikin* that this saying is from the Jewish tradition (2/74).

And I do not ask You for Heaven.

But all I want is the Essence of Your Love.

Several Muslim scholars have refuted these claims by arguing that worshipping out of fear, and/or in the hope of reward, is a valid form of worship that follows in the footsteps of prophets and the faithful who “seek means of access to their Lord, [striving as to] which of them would be nearest, and they hope for His mercy and fear His punishment. Indeed, the punishment of your Lord is ever feared” (Holy Qur’an, 17:57). Those who fear Allah’s punishment and seek His reward are the ones called “the servants of Al-Rahman (the Most Merciful)” as in “And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace, And those who spend [part of] the night to their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer], And those who say: ‘Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell’. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering; Indeed, it is evil as a settlement and residence” (Holy Qur’an, 25:63-66). Allah also praises His servants who pray for Him to save them from hell, as in “Those who say, ‘Our Lord, indeed we have believed, so forgive us our sins and protect us from the punishment of the Fire’” (Holy Qur’an, 3:16).

Likewise, Allah praises the believers who ask Him to allow them into heaven and protect them against hell: “Indeed, the creation of heaven and earth, and the alternation of night and day are signs for those of understanding. Those who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides, and give thought to the creation of heaven and earth, [saying]: ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire’. Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit to the Fire - You have disgraced him, and for the wrongdoers there are no helpers. Our Lord, indeed we have heard a caller calling to faith, [saying]: ‘Believe in your Lord’, and we have believed. Our Lord, so forgive us our sins and remove from us our misdeeds and cause us to die with the righteous. Our Lord, and grant us what You promised us through Your messengers and do not disgrace us on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, You do not fail in [Your] promise.” And their Lord responded to them: “Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward.” (Holy Qur’an, 3:90-95).

The venerated Sunnah has several hadiths that support the argument against the above-mentioned Sufi claims. For example, Abu Hurayrah reports that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Allah asks His angels about His servants although He is

best informed about them: ‘Where have you come from?’ They say: ‘We come from Your servants upon the earth who had been glorifying You (reciting Subhan Allah), uttering Your Greatness (saying Allahu Akbar) and uttering Your Oneness (La ilaha illa Allah) and praising You (uttering al-Hamdu Lillah) and begging of You’. Allah would ask: ‘Have they seen Me?’ They would say, ‘No, our Lord’. He would say: ‘What if they were to see Me?’ They (the angels) say: ‘They would remember you much more intensely’. They also say: ‘Our Lord, they beg of You Your Paradise’. He (Allah) would say: ‘Have they seen My Paradise?’ They say: ‘No, our Lord’. He would say: ‘What if they were to see My Paradise?’ They (the angels) say: ‘They would beg You even more. They also seek Your protection’. He (the Lord) would say: ‘What do they seek protection from?’ They (the angels) would say: ‘Our Lord, from the Hell-Fire’. He (the Lord) would say: ‘Have they seen My Fire?’ They would say: ‘No’. He (the Lord) would say: ‘What if they were to see My Fire?’ They would say: ‘They would beg for Your forgiveness’. He would say: ‘I grant pardon to them, and confer upon them what they ask for and grant them protection against that which they seek protection from.’⁽¹⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) once said to his companions: “Seek Allah’s protection from the Fire!”⁽²⁾ Rabi`a Ibn Ka`b Al-Aslami narrates: “I was with the Prophet one night and I brought him water and what he asked for. He said to me: “Ask (anything you like).” I said: “I ask your company in Paradise.” The Prophet said: “Anything else besides this?” I said: “That is all I ask for.” He said: “Then help me achieve this for you by devoting yourself often to prostration.”

Ibn Al-Qayyim notes in *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* that “the main objective of the Ummah is to seek heaven and to be saved from hell. This combination of hope and fear serves as a constant reminder. At the same time, believing in heaven and hell is an essential article of faith. There are numerous hadiths in which the Prophet (PBUH) repeatedly mentions things that people do that result in them going to either heaven or hell. These hadiths encourage people to do good deeds and to stay on the straight path. Ibn Al-Qayyim also reminds his readers that Allah likes His servants to ask Him to let them into heaven and to protect them from hell. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Indeed, Allah gets angry with those who do not ask Him.”⁽³⁾ Nothing is more worthy to ask for than gaining entrance to heaven and being saved from hell.”

Ibn Al-Qayyim concludes that if the heart stops seeking heaven and running away from hell, it falters. However, if the heart is constantly desiring heaven, one

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on prayers (6408), Muslim (2689), and Ahmed (7424).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Fudayl Ibn Ghazwan (158) and Abu Nuaym (70).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (weak; 9701), Al-Tirmidhi (3373), Ibn Majah (3827), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (3085).

works hard to be worthy of it. If Allah did not want people to seek heaven, He would not have described it to them in ways that make them look forward to it.⁽¹⁾

The Truth About Heaven And Hell

Ibn Al-Qayyim takes a moderate approach in his analysis of the concepts of heaven and hell. He summarizes the Sufi interpretations and the views of those opposed to Sufism, and then states that “heaven is not just a garden with trees, food, drink, flowing rivers, and palaces, etc., but heaven is absolute bliss. The greatest bliss in heaven is to see Allah, to listen to Him directly, and to be close to Him. There is no bliss greater than being someone with whom Allah is pleased, for He says “but approval from Allah is greater” (Holy Qur’an, 9:72). The joys and pleasures of heaven are nothing compared to being close to Allah.” Al-Mutanabbi the poet writes:

*Suffice it for you to give me the least,
But your least is not to be called little.*

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “By Allah, the greatest thing Allah ever gives them [the faithful] is looking at Him.”⁽²⁾ He also says: “When they see Allah with their own eyes, they will forget all the pleasures of heaven.”⁽³⁾

Ibn Al-Qayyim concludes that “there is no doubt that being close to Allah is greater than anything the mind can imagine. There is no joy or bliss that compares with the company of Allah in heaven. How can anyone claim not to be interested in heaven or afraid of hell, where the worst punishment is being deprived from seeing Allah or being close to Him? It is heaven that all the prophets, their companions, the martyrs, and the faithful desire, and it is hell that they want to be saved from.”⁽⁴⁾

Ibn Al-Qayyim’s treatise also refutes uninformed claims that heaven in Islam is all about physical pleasures whereas heaven in Christianity is purely spiritual. He makes it clear that heaven is a place of peace and bliss, both physical and spiritual, for these are the two dimensions of humanity which extend from this world into the hereafter.

Dr. Draz addresses the second part of this uninformed claim by demonstrating how it contradicts Biblical texts: “For example, Jesus, Peace be upon Him, tells his disciples: ‘I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may

(1) See Ibn Al-Qayyim, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn*, Matba‘at Al-Sunnah Al-Muhammadiyah, 2:75-79.

(2) Narrated via Suhab Al-Rumi by Muslim on faith (181) and Ahmed (23925).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Omar by Abd Ibn Hamid in his *Musnad* (851).

(4) See Ibn Al-Qayyim, *Madārij Al-Sālikīn*.

eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the 12 tribes of Israel' (Luke, 22:29-30). He also says: 'When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your kinsmen or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return, and you be repaid. But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just' (Luke, 14:12-15). In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus, Peace be upon Him, tells his disciples: 'I tell you I shall not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom'" (Matthew, 26:29).

"In Revelations, one reads: 'I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of Allah' (2:7), 'To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna' (2:17), 'The one who is victorious will, like them, be dressed in white' (3:5), 'To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life' (21:6), and 'Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat down on them, nor any scorching heat' (7:16). In another description of heaven, which is called the New Jerusalem, one reads: 'The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone' (21:18-19) and 'On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing 12 crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month' (22:1).

"The early Christians took these verses to heart and believed them to be the truth. However, these same verses were later reinterpreted as metaphors in response to atheists' criticisms, even though Christian scholars agree that resurrection is both physical and spiritual. They also agree that the torments of hell are also physical and spiritual as stated by Jesus when he says: 'And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell' (Matthew, 10:28) and 'The Son of man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth' (Matthew 13:41-42). How can anyone believe some verses and disbelieve others from the same book?"⁽¹⁾

In his conclusion, Dr. Draz comments: "the truth of the matter is that the physical pleasures in heaven are like decorations awarded by royalties. It is not the monetary value of the decoration that counts, but it is their symbolic meaning that is valuable. In the case of heaven, it is an honor to be saved by Allah, who says: 'and approval from Allah. And Allah is Seeing of [His] servants' (Holy Qur'an, 3:15). On the other hand, the torments of hell are not just about pain, but the disgrace of being out of favor. The Holy Qur'an says: 'Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit

(1) See *Kalimāt fī Mabādi' Ilm Al-Akhlāq* by Mohammed Abdullah Draz, 36-37.

to the Fire - You have disgraced him' (Holy Qur'an, 3:192)." Dr. Draz's argument ends with a quote from Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali's *Minhāj Al-'ārifīn* (*Methodology for Worshippers*) on the importance of encouragement and a warning for everyone who seeks the path of righteousness. Al-Ghazali explains that "in order to stay on the straight path, one needs to maintain a balance between the push and pull of two forces, namely hope and fear. Fear is needed for two reasons. First, it discourages one from committing sinful acts, for the inner self has a tendency to prefer evil, and only fear deters it. In other words, it does not have the characteristics of a free person who acts on honor as eloquently described by Yazid Ibn Mufarrigh Al-Himyari:

A slave listens only to the cane

But a word makes a free man abstain.

The other reason is that fear helps prevent liking sinful acts, which would ruin anyone who goes down this path. Fear makes one dislike sin because of its negative consequences.

Hope, on the other hand, encourages people to act righteously, even though the inner self often resists doing such acts, and Satan inspires them to do otherwise. In the absence of hope, people feel that the rewards associated with righteous acts are out of their reach. As a result, their will to do good deeds falters and they lose the motivation to stay on the right path. For people to act righteously, they need to have strong hope in Allah's mercy and generosity. As Al-Ghazali's teacher, Imam Abu Al-Ma`ali Al-Juwayni, says that "sadness weakens the appetite for food, fear deters from sin, hope gives people the strength to do righteous acts, and remembering death makes people lose their curiosity." Hope also gives people the strength needed to overcome hardships. Once people identify a goal they like, they are willing to do what it takes to achieve it, and they enjoy the hard work that leads to it. Hope is a form of love, which makes people willing to endure hardships. A bee keeper puts up with stings because he knows how sweet the honey is, and a laborer does not mind carrying heavy weights up ladders in the summer heat because he knows he will be paid at the end of the day. Farmers work hard throughout the season because they think of harvest time. In the same fashion, those who have the joys of heaven as their goal are willing to do what it takes; they are willing to perform the required acts of worship, they would deprive themselves of the pleasures that Allah has forbidden, and they will patiently endure the hardships inflicted by others, all for the sake of heaven.

There are two aspects to worshipping Allah: complying with His commandments and refraining from doing what He has forbidden. Neither aspect can be fulfilled without encouragement and warning. This is because the inner self has a tendency to prefer evil. This is a very similar situation to dealing with a stubborn

camel; it needs someone to be in charge and to give it directions, and if it falls in a hole, someone needs to use a whip if necessary to get it out and save its life, but at the same time, dangling a carrot can also help. Many children act the same way. They need encouragement from their parents to go to school, but the teacher needs to be firm to make them learn. The inner self functions the same way. It needs an approach that balances hope and fear, or the carrot and the stick, to stay on the true path.

This life is but a journey down a path between two cliffs, with a massive obstacle in the way. To get over this obstacle, one has to be very careful and alert, and to stay on the middle path. If one veers off the middle path, he would fall into one of the two abysses: false hope and despair. This middle path is the path of hope and fear. If one leans too far toward hope, he loses his fear and falls into the abyss of false hope, which Allah has warned us against in the Holy Qur'an: "But no one feels secure in the plan of Allah except those who lose" (7:99). If fear takes over, one falls into the abyss of despair, which is the antithesis of faith: "Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except for those who disbelieve" (Holy Qur'an, 12:87). This middle path is the path of the faithful who "used to hasten to good deeds and supplicate Us in hope and fear, and they were to Us humbly submissive" (21:90)."⁽¹⁾

Al-Ghazali further elaborates on this middle path analogy: "You can now see that there are three paths ahead of you: the path of false hope, the path of despair, and the middle path of hope and fear. If your foot slips off the middle path, you are doomed. This is because the paths of false hope and despair are tempting, for they seem easier to navigate. Those who go down the path of false hope only see Allah's mercy to the point of taking it for granted, i.e., they think that no matter what they do they would be forgiven. Those who go down the path of fear realize how powerless they are and see only Allah's might and wrath; thus, they lose hope in His mercy and fall into despair. While the middle road is balanced, it is the most difficult one. It is the path of salvation, the path to heaven where one gets to be in Allah's presence. It is the path of those who "supplicate their Lord in fear and hope" (Holy Qur'an, 32:16), and their reward is guaranteed, for "No soul knows what has been hidden from them for the comfort of their eyes, as reward for what they have done" (Holy Qur'an, 32:17). One needs to keep this last verse in mind and think deeply about it, for the reward is the result of one's actions."⁽²⁾

(1) See Al-Ghazali's *Minhāj Al-ʿārifīn* (Methodology for the Worshippers), Edited by Mahmoud Mustafa Hallawi, Mu'assasat Al-Risala, 1989, Pages 247-253.

(2) Ibid

1.5 Effects Of Faith-Based Education On Controlling Instincts And Habits

All People Can Repent And Be Reformed

There are those who believe that people are born either good or evil and they stay as such until their death. According to this view, those who are innately good are the happy ones who are kind to others and eager to do good deeds. They also dislike injustice, corruption, and those who act in such ways. There are also those who are inherently evil; they dislike people and detest righteous deeds. They would not help those in need, but might even do injustice to them on behalf of those in power. If such a view was viable, there would have been no need for schools, universities, mosques, and other social and educational institutions. In fact, life itself would be pointless because there is no possibility of change in people's characters.

We have, however, seen many sinners and evil doers repent and change their ways. Those are the ones who say: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers" (Holy Qur'an, 7:23). Dr. Draz comments in this regard: "It is unfair and unjust to judge people by their behavioral patterns and habits. This is like someone who deems a desert as barren because it cannot be cultivated without trying to water it or to reclaim its soil. Those who pass such judgments on people have themselves lost hope and faith. Hope and hard work are the keys to success, which is the Prophet's advice: "Adhere to that which is beneficial for you. Keep asking Allah for help and do not give up."⁽¹⁾ This is the true jihad, which the Prophet (PBUH) defines as: "A Mujahid is one who strives against his own inner self."⁽²⁾

Allah has promised success to those who strive to do righteous deeds: "And those who believe and do righteous deeds - We will surely admit them among the righteous [into Paradise]" (Holy Qur'an, 29:9). He has also promised those who engage in jihad with their inner selves to reach their destination: "And those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways" (Holy Qur'an, 29:69). It is important to note here that this verse was revealed in Mecca before the first Muslim community engaged in any warfare. The verse is about jihad, defined as patience, strong will, and resisting temptation, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: "If a man continues to speak the truth and makes truth his object, he will be recorded in Allah's presence as eminently truthful."⁽³⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) makes it clear

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on fate (2664), Ahmed (8791), and Ibn Majah (79).

(2) Narrated via Fudala Ibn Ubayd by Ahmed (sound; 23965), Al-Tirmidhi on jihad (sound; 1621), and Al-Albani in *Al-Sahīḥa* (corrected; 549).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari on manners (6094), and Muslim on family ties (2607).

that anyone who strives against the evils in his inner self, Allah will support him: "Whoever abstains from asking others, Allah will make him contented, and whoever tries to make himself self-sufficient, Allah will make him self-sufficient. And whoever tries to be patient, Allah will make him patient. Nobody can be given a blessing better and greater than patience."⁽¹⁾

The Doors Are Open For Those Who Want To Repent

The door of repentance is wide open to all, as stated in the Holy Qur'an: "Oh you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincere repentance" (66:8), and "Turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed" (24:31). In fact, Allah calls upon those who disbelieve and invites them to repent and join the believers in His light: "Say to those who have disbelieved [that] if they cease, what has previously occurred will be forgiven for them. But if they return [to hostility] - then the precedent of the former [rebellious] peoples has already taken place" (Holy Qur'an, 8:38). In short, the Holy Qur'an clearly states that the door of repentance is always open wide for everyone, no matter what sins they have committed: "Say, 'Oh, My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful'" (39:53). Despite the sins they have committed, Allah still calls them "My servants" to let them know that His mercy encompasses everyone and everything.

There is a particular group of sinners for whom Allah has reserved the most severe punishments. Those are murderers, highway robbers, and thugs who spread chaos and instill fear in society. Their punishment is to "be killed or crucified, or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides, or that they be exiled from the land" (Holy Qur'an, 5:33). However, the door of repentance is open for them, for the very next verse says: "Except for those who return [repenting] before you apprehend them. And know that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 5:34). Thieves also have a chance to get back to their senses and repent: "[As for] the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 5:35). Accusing honorable men and women of adultery is considered a heinous crime in the Holy Qur'an, but after Allah states their punishment, He makes an exception for those who repent: "And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with 80 lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient, Except for those who repent thereafter and reform, for indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 24:4-5).

(1) Narrated via Abu Said Al-Khudri by Al-Bukhari (1469) and Muslim (1053), both on *Zakat* and see *Kalimāt fī Mabādī' Ilm Al-Akhlāq* by Mohammed Abdullah Draz, 15.

Education And Guidance Overcome Instincts And Habits

There is no doubt that people's behavior is heavily influenced by their desires and habits. By "desires" I mean basic instincts and needs, such as eating, drinking, sex, and others, many of which are shared between humans and animals, but some are specific to humans. Of all the trees in heaven, Satan tempted Adam to eat from the one tree that Allah had ordered him not to touch. Adam fell to temptation, and Satan shared the fruit with him and his wife: "And he swore [by Allah] to them: 'Indeed, I am to you from among the sincere advisors'. So he made them fall, through deception. And when they tasted of the tree, their private parts became apparent to them, and they began to fasten together over themselves from the leaves of Paradise. And their Lord called to them: 'Did I not forbid you from that tree and tell you that Satan is to you a clear enemy?' They said: 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers'" (Holy Qur'an, 7:21-23).

The Power Of Instincts vs. The Power Of Faith

Basic instincts, as I discuss in my book *Al-ʿīmān wal-Ḥayāh (Faith and Life)*, are powerful drivers that shape human behavior. However, the ideas of faith can elevate people beyond the control of instincts and desires.⁽¹⁾ Of all human basic instincts, sex is probably the most powerful one. In fact, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, analyzed sex as the underlying force behind all human behavior. This view ignores all other human instincts and the spiritual side of humanity.⁽²⁾

The sex drive is at its peak during youth. Given young people's limited life experience, desires, and vivid imagination, young people tend to be tempted to engage in premarital relationships without fear of punishment, the law, or scandal. Only faith can deter young people from forbidden sexual relations. This is exactly what happened to Joseph, Peace be upon Him. He was a young handsome man, and a beautiful powerful woman seduced him. She was the King's wife and he was her servant. The doors were closed and there was nothing to stop him as the Holy Qur'an tells the story: "And she, in whose house he was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said: 'Come, you!'" (12:23). Joseph did not give in to temptation, and he would not betray the King's trust: "He said: '[I seek] the refuge of Allah. Indeed, he is my master, who has made good my residence. Indeed, wrongdoers will not succeed'" (Holy Qur'an, 12:23). She tried to overpower him with her seduction and threats, but she could not, as she later told her friends:

(1) Contemporary psychologists prefer to avoid the term "instincts" and use "motives" instead. However, I use the term "instincts" because it is more common among non-specialists.

(2) For a detailed discussion on the topic, please see *Al-Insān bayna Al-Mādiyya wal-Islām (Humanity between Materialism and Islam)* by Mohammed Qutb, Cairo: Dar Al-Shuruq, 1989.

“She said: ‘That is the one about whom you blamed me. And I certainly sought to seduce him, but he firmly refused; and if he will not do what I order him, he will surely be imprisoned and will be of those debased’” (Holy Qur’an, 12:32). Joseph had only one place to go; he asked Allah for help: “He said: ‘My Lord, prison is more to my liking than that to which they invite me. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant’” (Holy Qur’an, 12:33). Only his faith saved him from temptation.

It is only natural for people to seek an outlet and satisfaction for their desires. As time goes by, it becomes more and more difficult to abstain. Only faith can help control burning desires. Said Ibn Mansour tells a story about Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khattab who went out one night on patrol around the town. Ibn Al-Khattab passed by the house of a woman whose husband had been gone for weeks. She was lonely and obviously struggling with her sexual urges. He heard her sing:

This night is too long and lonely,

And I have no lover by my side.

It is out of fear of Almighty Allah only,

That this bed is not rocking side to side.⁽¹⁾

Faith Overcomes Aggressive Instinct

Sex is not the only drive that influences human behavior. Aggression is another instinct that drives people to take revenge, wreak havoc, and act like monsters. This is Satan who throws burning embers into people’s hearts to take control over them. Only faith can overpower this destructive instinct by putting out the fire of anger with peace. Faith leads people to forgive those who hurt them and respond to evil with forbearance. The Holy Qur’an tells us the story of Adam’s sons “when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other” (Holy Qur’an, 5:27). The evil son became angry and said: “I will surely kill you”, but the good son responded: “Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me - I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds” (Holy Qur’an, 5:27-28). It is faith and fear of Allah that help people control their aggression. Omar once said: “He who fears Allah does not satisfy his urges for revenge and does not do as he pleases. Were it not for the Day of Judgment and people’s fear of it, life would have been very different.”⁽²⁾ Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz, the Caliph, was once addressed by a man in an improper way.

(1) See Said Ibn Mansour in his *Sunan Said Ibn Mansour* (2463).

(2) Narrated by Abu Dawud (98) and Abu Nuaym (8/57).

The man was so rude to him, that Omar was quite angry. He almost responded with aggression, but he took hold of himself and told the man: “You wanted Satan to push me into evil by challenging my power as the ruler. You wanted me to do injustice to you so that I would pay you back on the Day of Judgment. Please, go in peace, for I am not interested in fighting with you.”⁽¹⁾

Faith Overcomes Selfishness

Selfishness is a powerful instinct that affects everyone’s behavior. It pushes people to act in self-serving ways, to vie for worldly matters, and to inflict injustice upon others. Once selfishness triggers a conflict, self-preservation takes over one’s mind, and defeating the opponent becomes paramount, regardless of the means or the cost. Only faith can bring peace to warring sides by breaking the idols of self-interest. This is when peace replaces conflict, and altruism replaces selfishness. These changes occur only when a faithful person realizes that such conflicts are fought over worthless worldly gains, whereas what Allah has in store for the faithful is the only true victory.

Umm Salama, the Prophet’s (PBUH) wife, tells the story of two brothers who were disputing their inheritance, but neither had any evidence supporting his claims. They went to the Prophet (PBUH) to be their judge, but their hearts were filled with selfishness and hatred. He said to them: “I am nothing but a mortal man, and you come to me to be your judge. If one of you is more eloquent and makes a more convincing argument, I may judge in his favor. Thus, know this: If I give one of you something he does not rightfully deserve, I am giving him a place in hell.” When the brothers heard the Prophet’s words, their hearts softened, and they wept. Each of them said: “What is mine goes to you.” The Prophet then said: “Now that you have said that, divide it up rightfully. Then draw lots, and forgive each other for whatever errors you might unintentionally make while dividing it up.”⁽²⁾ This was a case where common law has nothing to say due to lack of evidence, but when faith intervenes, justice is served.

The Prophet (PBUH) tells another story of true altruism: “A man bought a piece of land and found a jar filled with gold in it. He said to the man who sold it to him: ‘Take your gold, for I have bought only the land from you and not the gold’. The former owner of the land said: ‘I sold you the land with everything in it’. The two men took their case before a third to be their judge. The third man asked them: ‘Do you have children?’ One of the two men said: ‘I have a son’. The other said: ‘I

(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on faith (7971).

(2) Narrated by Abu Dawud in his chapter on legal disputes (3584), Al-Hakim on legal rulings (corrected citing Muslim; 4/95), and Ibn Abd Al-Hadi in *Tanqih Al-Tahqiq* (3251).

have a daughter'. The judge said: 'Marry the girl to the boy and spend the money on them; and whatever remains, give it in charity.'"⁽¹⁾

Faith Breaks Habits

We have seen how faith can overpower basic instincts, and how faith can redirect these instincts in the right direction. People, however, are subject to other motives besides their instincts, such as habits. Habits are formed when people receive pleasurable reinforcement for doing something. This pleasant experience motivates them to repeat that same action, and eventually the repetition becomes a habit. Once a habit is established, it is difficult to change it, and as one continues to do the same thing again and again, the habit becomes very difficult to break.

Habit Is Powerful

Eighteenth Century French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau states that "Man is born and dies a slave. The infant is bound up in swaddling clothes; the corpse is nailed down in a coffin. All his life long, man is imprisoned by institutions."⁽²⁾ By "institutions" Rousseau means social traditions and personal habits. Early behaviorist work on human psychology follows in the same vein and even claims that human psychology can be reduced to "a series of habits". Old traditions also support the claim that "habits are second nature", which suggests that habits are second in power only to the "first nature", or the instincts with which people are born.

We are all born with eyes and ears, but anyone who tries to hear with his eyes or see with his ears would definitely fail. This is how powerful our "first nature" is, but our "second nature", which is our habits, is also quite powerful. The difference is that we choose our second nature, and we feed it until it overpowers our will. Such habits, such as the way we dress, eat, drink, walk, talk, and treat others, are so prevalent in our lives that they become automated types of behaviors that we do not even think about. Some of those habits can be destructive. For example, people can develop habits of eating things that are harmful to their bodies, consuming substances that intoxicate them, wearing clothes that are uncomfortable, or doing things that they judge others for doing. These are all habits that people do regularly without even noticing. Some habits are extremely difficult to break even if they have dire consequences, such as drinking alcohol, using drugs, and gambling.

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on stories told by prophets (3472) and Muslim in his chapter on legal rulings (1721).

(2) Rousseau, Jean-Jacques and Barbara Foxley (Translator). *Emile: Or, On Education*. 1762.

To break a habit, one has to wage war against it. It is a war in which victory is only for those armed with a will of steel and unyielding determination. We have seen over and over that punishments and legal consequences do not help people break their bad habits. Only faith and personal jihad can free people from the enslavement of their habits.

Banning Alcohol: The Case Of Prohibition In The U.S. And In The Prophet's Community

In this section, I give an example of how faith can help break deeply entrenched habits by comparing the relatively recent example of American prohibition, where law enforcement was the means of banning alcohol, with the example of how faith was the means of banning alcohol in the early days of Islam.

Alcoholism and excessive use of alcohol became such a problem in the United States early in the 20th century that the government at the time was fully convinced that alcohol was dangerous to individuals, families, and the society as a whole. As a response, the American government issued a new law that banned alcohol, but it quickly became obvious that such a law could not be enforced. In fact, criminal elements and organized crime groups specialized in coming up with creative ways to smuggle and conceal alcohol. Moreover, the black market for alcohol was saturated with some of the most dangerous kinds of alcohol. It is important to note here that this law was passed through a democratic process in a free country where the constitution protects citizens against harm and corruption. This law was passed with significant public support, as the majority of people understood the dangers of legal access to alcohol.

In 1918, American public opinion was galvanized over the issue of legal access to alcohol. In 1919, the American Constitution was amended (the 18th Amendment), and a new law was drafted and passed (The National Prohibition Act, informally known as the Volstead Act). The government provided all the resources necessary to enforce the Prohibition Act. For example, the US Navy monitored the coasts to foil smuggling attempts; the US Air Force was tasked with air surveillance; and all government agencies engaged in a massive media campaign to inform the public about the dangers of alcohol. The government spent over 60 million dollars on media campaigns that support the Prohibition Act. It published over 10 billion pages of brochures, books, and informational materials. Over the next 14 years, the cost of enforcing the Prohibition Act exceeded 250 million dollars. In that same period, over 300 people were executed and 532,000 were given prison sentences for crimes associated with violating the Prohibition Act. The government issued over 15 million dollars in fines and confiscated properties valued at over 404 million dollars as penalties. However, all these efforts were

in vain, and Americans became more interested in alcohol than ever before. As a result of this failure, the American government repealed the Prohibition Act in 1933, thus legalizing alcohol and ending the Prohibition Era.⁽¹⁾

The Prohibition Act failed in banning alcohol and preventing related problems, even though the majority of the American people were convinced of the dangers of alcohol. This was not an issue of conviction, but an issue of will power. As one American writer commented, “Determination to achieve one’s goals requires spirituality and devoting one’s life to one well-chosen ideal. Will power always overpowers culture, especially when culture, rather than religion, is the foundation of one’s determination and source of spirituality.”

Navy Failed And Faith Won

Let’s compare the Prohibition Era to a similar context in Islamic history. Islam appeared in a society where alcohol was quite common. In fact, wine was one of the main themes of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. For example, Abu Mihjin Al-Thaqfi, the pre-Islamic poet, writes:

*When I die, bury me next to a vine,
Whose roots will give my bones its wine.*

Imri’u Al-Qays, the prominent pre-Islamic poet, was drinking when he heard that his father was murdered. This is when he uttered his famous line: “Today we drink. Tomorrow we think.” Only a handful of pre-Islamic Arabs stayed away from alcohol, such as Zayd Ibn Amr Ibn Nufayl, and it was considered so uncommon that it was recorded in their histories. Pre-Islamic love for wine left its mark on the language, for they had over 100 words for “wine”.⁽²⁾ Besides, it was a booming trade.

Islam took a gradual approach to prohibition. When the first two prohibition verses were revealed, they did not prohibit drinking categorically. These are: “They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, ‘In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:219) and “Oh you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying” (Holy Qur’an, 2:43). The early Muslims continued to drink alcohol until the next prohibition verse was revealed later: “Oh you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan.

(1) See Abu Al-A’la Al-Mawdudi’s *Tanqīhāt*, quoted in Abu Al-Hassan Al-Nadwi’s *Mādhā Khasira Al-‘ālam bi-Inḥitāt Al-Muslimīn?* (Islam and the World: The Rise and Decline of the Muslims and Its Effect on Mankind), Page 177.

(2) See *Ḥalabat Al-Kumayt* (Al-Kumayt’s Arena), Page 6.

Avoid them that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you not desist?" (Holy Qur'an, 5:90-91). Once this verse was revealed, people were already psychologically prepared for prohibition and they obeyed. They smashed their drinking glasses and dumped the wine they had in the streets until the whole city of Medina reeked with alcohol.

Abu Sa'ed narrates that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: "Oh people, Allah is giving an indication (of the prohibition) of wine. He is probably soon going to reveal a commandment about it. Whoever has wine should sell it, and benefit from of it" [That was before the prohibition]. He (the narrator) continues: "We waited for some time. Then Allah's Prophet said: 'Allah, the Exalted, has forbidden wine. Whoever hears this verse and has wine left should neither drink it nor sell it.'" He (the narrator) says: "People then brought whatever wine they had and spilled it in the streets of Medina."⁽¹⁾

Anas narrates: "I was serving wine to Abu Ubayda and Abu Talha when someone came in with the news that alcohol has been forbidden. Abu Talha called me and said: 'Anas, get up and throw it all out'. And I did."⁽²⁾ Burayda Ibn Al-Haseeb narrates: "We were once drinking when wine was still permissible. The Prophet (PBUH) came in, so I stood up to greet him, and he recited 'Oh you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you not desist?' (Holy Qur'an, 5:90-91). I went back to my drinking friends and recited the verse to them. They collected whatever wine was left in their mouths under their upper lips, and then spat it all into their glasses. They all said: 'Yes Our Lord, we desist; we desist'. "⁽³⁾ These two stories of prohibition give a clear example of how faith is the only way to break habits, as only faith can make people heed the call and submit willingly, no matter how hard some habits are to break.⁽⁴⁾

Effects Of Education And Guidance On Habits

In his book *Manhaj Al-Tarbiya Al-Islāmiyya (The Curriculum in Islamic Education)*, Mohammed Qutb writes:

(1) Narrated by Muslim (1578).

(2) Narrated via Anas by Al-Bukhari (5582) and Muslim (1980) in their respective chapters on drinking.

(3) Narrated by Al-Tabarani in his exegesis of Surat Al-Ma'ida (Holy Qur'an, Chapter 5).

(4) See Al-Qaradawi's *Al-Imān wal-Ḥayāh* (Faith and Life), 18th edition, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 2013, Pages 195-205.

“Habits play a critical role in human behavioral patterns, as many such patterns become automatic, hence saving time and effort, which in turn increases productivity by helping people focus on new tasks. Without this innate ability to form habits, people would spend their entire lives learning how to walk, talk, and do mathematics. However, habits can become a problem if they are completely automated in such a way that blocks the involvement of the mind and the heart.

Islam uses habit formation strategies to establish favorable behavioral patterns. These strategies make it easier for people to perform good deeds effortlessly and without their inner selves resisting. The issue, however, is that automating human behavior makes it difficult for many people to remember why they do such good deeds, as they forget the connection between these acts and their ultimate goal, Allah.

As Islam developed in the dark ages of pre-Islamic Arabia, it applied two strategies to ending well-established poor habits: immediate categorical prohibition and gradual prohibition, depending on the nature of the targeted habit. All the poor habits that had to do with belief systems and the relationship with Allah were categorically prohibited immediately. These included polytheism and related traditions, practices, and rituals, for such habits and traditions cannot coexist with monotheistic faith. The same applied to evil cultural traditions, such as female infanticide, which is a form of injustice that inherently contradicts faith: “And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked what sin she was killed for” (Holy Qur’an, 81:8-9). Examples of personal habits that were categorically prohibited included: telling falsehoods, gossip, slander, and arrogance, among others. These were all personality traits that could be reversed immediately with the impact of faith.

Social traditions, however, cannot be reversed quickly, especially if they are associated with economic activities and social acceptance. Traditions such as drinking alcohol, adultery, usury, and slavery, were prohibited gradually using educational and spiritual strategies. Alcohol was banned in four steps. The first step was separating intoxication from good provision: “And from the fruits of the palm trees and grapevines you take intoxicant and good provision” (Holy Qur’an, 16:67). This verse was a sign from Allah that alcohol would be banned sooner or later. The second stage involved addressing hearts and minds gently: “They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, ‘In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:219). The third stage was conditional prohibition, which disallowed praying while intoxicated: “Oh you who have believed, do not approach prayer while you are intoxicated until you know what you are saying” (Holy Qur’an, 4:43). The final stage was categorical prohibition: “Oh you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but

defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful” (Holy Qur’an, 5:90).

Adultery and fornication were also prohibited in stages. The process started out with advice, and then moved on to threats of punishment, to instilling a punishment. It is important to note here that the same process also prohibited forcing women into prostitution: “And do not compel your slave girls to prostitution, if they desire chastity” (Holy Qur’an, 24:33). Temporary marriages, which were initially allowed, were also prohibited with prostitution as part of this process, leaving only permanent marriage, which is based on religion, as the only permissible means for sexual relationships.

Other evil social traditions and habits took even longer to be completely prohibited. Usury was only completely banned 10 years after of the Prophet’s (PBUH) migration to Medina, when the Muslim society had developed enough to endure such a change that was deeply rooted in economic life. Slavery took a slightly different process, as it was important to gradually free slaves from their own perception of being slaves first, before prohibiting all forms of slavery. This process ensured that former slaves did not suddenly face life as free individuals with the responsibilities associated with freedom.”⁽¹⁾

Our discussion thus far has focused on how faith can rid society of evil habits. We now turn to how faith can help establish and develop good habits. Faith itself is a habit that starts with an internal spiritual earthquake that shines light into the heart, thus transforming the individual into a faithful one. Once established, faith grows and develops, and it becomes associated with certain people at particular times and places. An individual who recently embraced faith starts to pray with others, and praying becomes a habit. One starts to listen to recitations of the Holy Qur’an, and it also becomes a habit. One could endure hardships in the company of other faithful people, and endurance becomes a habit. Gradually, the entire society develops into networks of faithful people who act righteously as individuals and as groups, which secures the sustainability of the faithful community. All of the good habits associated with faith develop in the same way: They start with inspiration, which creates the desire to do good deeds, and then this desire turns into actions that eventually become established behavioral patterns.

Praying, for example, starts with a desire to connect with Allah and to seek His help. This desire eventually turns into an action, which eventually becomes a regular practice. Later on, one prefers to pray in a group, which also develops into a habit. Giving to *Zakat* follows a similar pattern, as it starts out with a desire

(1) For details on the abolition of slavery in Islam, see the chapter on slavery in Islam in Mohammed Qutb’s *Shubuhāt ḥawla Al-Islām* (Islam: The Misunderstood Religion), Pages 33-65.

to rid oneself of selfishness by helping those in need. It also turns into an action involving a specific percentage of one's income to be given out at particular times. Finally, it transforms from an individual action to a social structure that benefits the entire community. All acts of worship in Islam start out as a personal desire to get closer to Allah, and turn into actions that involve the whole Ummah."⁽¹⁾

Education And Guidance Through Life Events

Major events in life, both happy and sad, affect our morality. Mohammed Qutb writes: "Life is but a series of events, mostly hardships and hard work, and we are always touched by these events. As long as we are alive, we are subject to life events; some are caused by our own mistakes, and some are completely outside our control. A good educator does not let these teachable moments become mere memories. Rather, a good educator takes advantage of every possible life event to teach about ethics, for while these events have a strong impact on us, the teaching potential of this impact lasts only for a fleeting moment."

Unlike other teaching strategies, real life experiences have a special deep impact on the inner self, which becomes fully engaged in such events. These are not regular day events, and they cannot be planned or simulated in artificial contexts. Unless such events are real, people detach themselves from them and engage only as observers rather than participants. Acts of worship can trigger religious experiences, which are very similar to major life events, but religious experiences are rare and very few people experience them. Life events, on the other hand, are externally imposed, and they fully engage individuals without their choice.

Using live events in moral education is quite effective, for it is best to "strike while the iron's hot," as the proverb goes. In such conditions, people are more likely to be touched to the core by these events, and therefore, they are more likely to learn. The Holy Qur'an consistently used major life events in educating the newly founded Muslim community, thus leaving a deep and lasting impact on their morality. This is the Ummah which Allah describes in "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 3:110).

When analyzing the contexts in which the Holy Qur'an was revealed, one sees a significant difference in the teaching strategies used in the Holy Qur'an in Mecca before the Prophet's migration, and afterwards in Medina. In Mecca, most of the teachings were about patience, enduring hardships, and jihad against one's inner self. In Medina, the teaching took a different direction, as it emphasized using

(1) See Mohammed Qutb's *Manhaj Al-Tarbiya Al-Islamiyya*, 1967, Pages 244-249.

force to respond to aggression and fighting against injustice. These differences are only apparent, for they have the same goal of dedicating one's life to Allah, which in turn establishes a balance within the inner self. To achieve this goal, one has to metaphorically lean to the left once, then to the right once, until balance is established.

Pre-Islamic Arab culture was based on tribalism, and the concept of dignity was limited to pride, whether one was being just or unjust. Dignity was not seen as a humanistic moral ideal, but as personal power. Whenever one's pride, or power, was challenged, the sword was the answer, regardless of justice or the consequences. This is why feuds were quite common and aggressions were incessant in this culture. The Pre-Islamic Arab tribes hardly knew peaceful coexistence. Even their moral ideals at that time, such as generosity and gallantry, were motivated by personal and tribal pride rather than ethics. When they had guests, they would offer their sheep to show hospitality, but their hospitality had a different objective; they wanted to brag about it and hear other people talk about it. While they were hospitable to strangers, they did not feed the hungry in their communities. These tribes did not respect their treaties, as their alliances were only based on tribal affiliations, regardless of whether their allies were fighting for a just cause or otherwise. The famous 7th Century League of the Virtuous, which was a peace treaty established by the leaders of the Meccan community to protect trade and pilgrimage, was a rare exception in this warring culture. These tribes went as far as manipulating their calendar to delay the months in which war was traditionally forbidden to suit their war plans. In some cases, they even took those months off the calendar and added them to a subsequent year if they wanted to continue with their wars. The Holy Qur'an came to change this culture: "Indeed, the postponing [of restriction within sacred months] is an increase in disbelief by which those who have disbelieved are led [further] astray. They make it lawful one year and unlawful another year" (9:37).

Education Through Life Events In The Meccan Era

Qur'anic education came in the Pre-Islamic Arabian society to tame the tribal spirit, first by helping people reconstruct their moral system from a system based on the values of personal and tribal pride, to one that aims only to serve Allah. They had to change the direction of their emotions and attitudes from tribal and self-interest to living in Allah's grace. Their main challenge was forbearance, as they had to endure many hardships in Allah's name. They had to respond to aggression by patiently seeking Allah's help rather than brandishing their swords. The first Muslims could have followed their traditions of waging tribal war or personal wars. They could have taken their revenge, even if they were all killed in the process. However, the new religion was not meant to be a continuation of the

evils of tribalism. The early Muslims' victory had to be a victory in Allah's name, not in the name of their tribes.

Only Qur'anic education deterred the early Muslims from going down the spiral of revenge. It was an education that emphasized patience and refraining from responding to aggression with more aggression. The Holy Qur'an ordered the early Muslims to "be patient over what they say and avoid them graciously" (73:10), and "Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little - Half of it - or subtract from it a little - Or add to it, and recite the Holy Qur'an with measured recitation. Indeed, We will cast upon you a heavy word" (Holy Qur'an, 73:2-5). Worshiping Allah was the means of education in this period: "Indeed, the hours of the night are more effective for concurrence [of heart and tongue] and more suitable for words" (Holy Qur'an, 73:6). The Prophet (PBUH) and his companions kept praying at night, learning how to turn to Allah for help, until their feet became swollen and cracked. This is when Allah revealed the following verse: "Indeed, your Lord knows, [Oh Mohammed], that you stand [in prayer] almost two thirds of the night, or half of it, or a third of it, and [so do] a group of those with you. And Allah determines [the extent of] the night and the day. He has known that you [Muslims] will not be able to do it and has turned to you in forgiveness, so recite what is easy [for you] of the Holy Qur'an. He has known that there will be among you those who are ill and others traveling throughout the land seeking [something] of the bounty of Allah and others fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite what is easy from it and establish prayer and give *Zakat* and loan Allah a goodly loan. And whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. It is better and greater in reward. And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 73:20). When the Merciful Educator saw that the early Muslims had completely rid themselves of their former culture of aggression and revenge, He ordered them to migrate and start their own Ummah. Unlike its predecessors in Arabia, this would be an Ummah established on faith, obedience of Allah, and readiness to fight in Allah's name.

Education Through Life Events In The Medina Era

The Qur'anic education that formed the Ummah in Medina took a different approach, particularly because the Ummah was much stronger than before. However, it still had the same objective, namely ridding the early Muslims of their attachments to worldly gains and focusing their lives on Allah's cause: "On the Day of Hunayn, when your great number pleased you, but it did not avail you at all, and the earth was confining for you with its vastness; then you turned back, fleeing" (Holy Qur'an, 9:25). The Day of Hunayn was a harsh lesson for the Muslims. They thought they were powerful and would not be defeated for lack of brave warriors. That lesson aimed to bring them back to Allah and to make sure they would not

revert to their Pre-Islamic ways. They learned that no matter how powerful they are, or how powerful their enemies are, it is not power on earth that determines outcomes. In Mecca, their enemies were powerful, but that power did not determine the future of the Ummah; it was Allah who decided. In Medina, the Muslims were powerful, but their power did not determine the outcome of that battle, for it was Allah who decided. It was also Allah who reminded them to go back to Him and seek His forgiveness and support: “Then Allah sent down His tranquility upon His Messenger and upon the believers and sent down soldier angels whom you did not see and punished those who disbelieved. And that is the recompense of the disbelievers. Then Allah will accept repentance after that for whom He wills; and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 9:26-27).

There are many examples in the Holy Qur’an of this approach to moral education. In the chapter of Al Imran, the Muslims are reminded how they were so distracted by their initial victory and the war booty that they forgot their original cause: “And Allah had certainly fulfilled His promise to you when you were killing the enemy by His permission until [the time] when you lost courage and fell to disputing about the order [given by the Prophet, PBUH] and disobeyed after He had shown you that which you love. Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter. Then he turned you back from them [defeated] that He might test you. And He has already forgiven you, and Allah is the possessor of bounty for the believers” (Holy Qur’an, 3:152).

A similar lesson is delivered in the context of the Battle of Badr: “[Remember, Oh believers], when Allah promised you one of the two groups - that it would be yours - and you wished that the unarmed one would be yours. But Allah intended to establish the truth by His words and to eliminate the disbelievers - That He should establish the truth and abolish falsehood, even if the criminals disliked it. [Remember] when you asked help of your Lord, and He answered you: ‘Indeed, I will reinforce you with a thousand from the angels, following one another’. And Allah made it nothing but good tidings so that your hearts would be assured thereby. And victory is not but from Allah. Indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise” (Holy Qur’an, 8:7-10).

The early Muslims learned another hard lesson regarding those who stayed behind during the Battle of Tabouk:

1. “Those who remained behind rejoiced in their staying [at home] after [the departure of] the Messenger of Allah and disliked to strive with their wealth and their lives in the cause of Allah and said: ‘Do not go forth in the heat’. Say, ‘The fire of Hell is more intensive in heat’ - if they would but understand. So let them laugh a little and [then] weep much as recompense for what they used to earn. If Allah should return you to a faction of them [after

the expedition] and then they ask your permission to go out [to battle], say, 'You will not go out with me, ever, and you will never fight with me an enemy. Indeed, you were satisfied with sitting [at home] the first time, so sit [now] with those who stay behind.'" (Holy Qur'an, 9:81-83).

2. "There is not upon the weak or upon the ill or upon those who do not find anything to spend any discomfort when they are sincere to Allah and His Messenger. There is not upon the doers of good any cause [for blame]. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said: 'I can find nothing for you to ride upon'. They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah]. The cause [for blame] is only upon those who ask permission of you while they are rich. They are satisfied to be with those who stay behind, and Allah has sealed over their hearts, so they do not know" (Holy Qur'an, 9:91-93).
3. "And [there are] others who have acknowledged their sins. They had mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad. Perhaps Allah will turn to them in forgiveness. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. Take, [Oh Mohammed, PBUH], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing. Do they not know that it is Allah who accepts repentance from His servants and receives charities and that it is Allah who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful? And say, 'Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do'. And [there are] others deferred until the command of Allah - whether He will punish them or whether He will forgive them. And Allah is Knowing and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 9:102-106).
4. "Indeed, Allah has purchased from the believers their lives and their properties [in exchange] for that they will have Paradise. They fight in the cause of Allah, so they kill and are killed. [It is] a true promise [binding] upon Him in the Torah and the Gospel and the Holy Qur'an. And who is truer to his covenant than Allah. So rejoice in your transaction which you have contracted. And it is that which is the great attainment. [Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travelers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah. And give good tidings to the believers" (Holy Qur'an, 9:111-112).

5. "Allah has already forgiven the Prophet (PBUH) and the Muhajireen and the Anṣār who followed him in the hour of difficulty after the hearts of a party of them had almost inclined [to doubt], and then He forgave them. Indeed, He was to them Kind and Merciful. And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them and they were certain that there is no refuge from Allah except in Him. Then He turned to them so they could repent. Indeed, Allah is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful. Oh you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true. It was not [proper] for the people of Madinah and those surrounding them of the bedouins that they remain behind after [the departure of] the Messenger of Allah or that they prefer themselves over his self. That is because they are not afflicted by thirst or fatigue or hunger in the cause of Allah, nor do they tread on any ground that enrages the disbelievers, nor do they inflict upon an enemy any infliction but that is registered for them as a righteous deed. Indeed, Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of the doers of good. Nor do they spend an expenditure, small or large, or cross a valley but that it is registered for them that Allah may reward them for the best of what they were doing" (Holy Qur'an, 9:117-121).

All of these verses served as lessons delivered in real time during those major events, and they have left a deep impact on the Ummah. After these events, the early Muslims never stayed behind when it was time to fight.

Despite the diversity of approaches adopted in Qur'anic Education and the various contexts in which these lessons were delivered, Qur'anic education has only one goal: for people to rid themselves from all worldly values and self-interest, and to serve only in Allah's cause: "Say, [O Mohammed, PBUH], 'If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased, are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people'" (Holy Qur'an, 9:24). When this verse becomes the reality of one's inner self, the individual becomes truly balanced. This is when one can face life without being corrupted by power or weakness, without fear of wavering at times of hardship or transgressing at times of peace. When the members of the community become living examples of this verse, we have the Ummah that Allah describes in "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 3:110).

In our application of Islamic education, we cannot personally go through all these events in order to learn from the Holy Qur'an. Rather, we should learn from

those experiences. The objective is to be connected with Allah at all times, in all events, and in all our thoughts and feelings. Every enlightened educator knows when people are most ready to receive these lessons and when hearts and minds can connect with them for a lasting effect.”⁽¹⁾

(1) See *Manhaj Al-Tarbiya Al-Islāmiyya*, Pages 253-262.

1.6 The Need For The Islamic Community And Islamic Regime

The moral system which we are calling for to serve as the foundation of the Ummah and the source of its morality has to be built entirely on Islam. It has to be built on Islamic creed, concepts, attitudes, morality, and laws. It is critical for this foundation to include all aspects of Islam, because it is a comprehensive system and each of its components is indispensable, following Allah's commandment: "And judge, [O Mohammed, PBUH], judge between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations and beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you" (5:49). We have seen how Allah has rebuked the Israelites for choosing to believe in some parts of their scripture and ignoring others: "Do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you, except for disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment" (Holy Qur'an, 2:85).

A Solution To The Problem Of Poverty

I have argued in previous publications, especially in *Mushkilat al-Faqr wa-Kayfa cālajahā al-Islām* (*The Problem Of Poverty And How Islam Treated It*), that poverty is a problem that cannot be solved by short term fixes. For poverty to be dealt with, it is necessary to have an Islamic system in an Islamic society. I have also argued that employment is the most effective tool in the struggle against poverty. Every individual should have suitable employment opportunities at fair wages that allow self-sufficiency. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to have a system that does not allow nepotism, favoritism, or any form of corruption. Even if everyone receives fair wages, the lifestyle imposed by the culture also has to be in compliance with Islamic teachings. It does not help if people receive fair wages if society imposes or promotes lifestyles that encourage people to spend their wages on cheap entertainment and unproductive, and often harmful, habits, such as fashion fads, smoking, nightclubs, and movie theaters, most of which offer sinful activities. It does not help if people receive fair wages while they live in a society rife with corruption, monopoly, usury, and dictatorship. What good are fair wages, if people have to pay high prices to buy their essential goods from the black market, get the services they need only if they pay bribes, or get loans at predatory interest rates. All these factors lead people to accumulate debts, which eventually reach a point where they cannot pay them back. If individuals get to this point, would society help them out, or would it let them drown in a gulf of legal penalties, as it is the case now? Employment by itself is not enough to guarantee a decent and honorable life.

An Islamic society, managed by an Islamic government, functions differently for the following reasons:

- a. An Islamic state provides professional training that allows people to achieve their full potential.
- b. It helps place individuals in the jobs that best suit their training and maximize their productivity.
- c. It provides all the means necessary to achieve maximum efficiency in terms of time and effort.
- d. It provides fair wages that provide a decent living for individuals and their families, in addition to the freedom to use their earnings in productive ways.
- e. If wages do not provide an individual with the minimum income required for a decent family life, the state is required to supplement the income.
- f. If circumstances force individuals to get into debt, to the point where they cannot pay back, the state is required to pay off that debt from *Zakat* funds and other state funding sources.
- g. An Islamic society does not have the evils of alcohol, prostitution, fashion manias, or the moral corruption that depletes people's recourses.

Suppose one of our societies where Islam is currently estranged decided to apply the Islamic *Zakat* system. What would happen? I think the answer would be along the following lines:

1. The state would collect insufficient funds that would fall short of meeting the needs of prevalent poverty and related social problems. These funds would be insufficient for the following reasons:
 - a. Religious motivation and Islamic awareness are weak among the citizens as a result of (a) the invasion of foreign ideologies and lifestyles, and (b) tax evasion by many people who already pay other taxes and distrust how the government manages tax money.
 - b. Most people do not have accumulated wealth or sufficient sources of income to serve as revenues for *Zakat*. This is a direct result of the way

many Muslims live nowadays, which involves adopting foreign lifestyles⁽¹⁾ that promote wasting money over luxuries and sinful pleasures, which are imported from foreign cultures.

2. Most of the limited revenues from *Zakat* would be spent on the bureaucracy needed to manage the collection and distribution of funds. This is another aspect of those imported lifestyles that promote luxuries and wasteful spending.
3. As a result of limited education and faith among those in charge of collecting and managing *Zakat*, as well as those receiving it, the distribution process would be chaotic, and consequently many deserving citizens would be deprived of their share of *Zakat*.
4. In the end, *Zakat* funds would fall short of meeting the needs of the majority of the poor, which would result in public outrage and doubt in the effectiveness of the *Zakat* system, and the entire Islamic system for that matter.

The above examples make it clear that adopting foreign social systems does not solve our problems, even if patched with some elements from the Islamic system.⁽²⁾

The Necessity Of An Islamic Framework

For the Islamic social system to function properly and succeed in achieving its goals, there are certain conditions that need to be met. There needs to be an Islamic framework for all social initiatives. This will be a framework that teachers and scholars need to instill in the hearts and minds of all citizens. This framework will serve to protect young people from imitating other cultures that behave like Pre-Islamic Arabs. Islam has to be the foundation of all aspects of life and the source of all guidelines underlying the functions of social institutions. For example, courts cannot apply some Islamic laws and ignore others. Educational, cultural, and media outlets cannot promote some Islamic messages in addition to others. The teachings of Islam constitute an indivisible whole, and all of its components complement each other. Applying some selective elements of Islam makes it impossible for the system to function as a whole, and it might even backfire.

(1) This is a reference to the hadith: "You would tread the same paths trodden by those before you inch by inch and step by step, so much so that if they had entered into a lizard hole, you would follow them. We said: «Do you mean Jews and Christians?» He said: «Who else?»" narrated via Abu Said Al-Khudri by Al-Bukhari in his section on the tales by the prophets (3456), Muslim in his chapter on knowledge (2669), and Ahmed in his *Musnad* (11897)

(2) See *Mushkilat al-Faqr wa-Kayfa 'ālahāh al-Islām* (The Problem of Poverty and How Islam Treated It) by Al-Qaradawi, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, Pages 136-138.

Let's take the punishments from fornication and adultery as an example. For these punishments to be applicable, marriage needs to be affordable so that there can be no excuses for seeking sexual fulfillment outside marriage. This also requires early marriage. In other words, it is necessary for the culture to facilitate marriage by reducing the current outrageous costs of housing, weddings, dowries, and furniture. Moreover, society needs to be cleansed of temptations, such as permissive television programs and movies, explicit novels, suggestive songs, and immodest clothing fashions. Only when these conditions are met can the punishments for adultery and fornication be applied. In communities where the above mentioned conditions are not met, we find it difficult for young people to satisfy their sexual needs in permissible ways, leaving sin as the only outlet. Young people in such communities are constantly bombarded with temptation, and they feel it is unfair to be punished for sin. In these communities, punishment is not effective as a deterrent.

The same argument applies to the punishments associated with stealing. These punishments cannot be applied in a community where *Zakat* and social welfare programs are not applied efficiently, and where corruption and injustice are prevalent. There is only one verse in the Holy Qur'an that specifies the penalty for stealing, but there are tens of verses that command people to establish *Zakat*, spend their money in Allah's cause, feed the poor, and fight corruption and all forms of social injustice, including usury, stinginess, and gambling. In a true Muslim society, no one steals out of poverty. This would be a just society where people are educated, employed, well fed, and safe, a society where the only ones who would steal are those hardened criminals who want to accumulate wealth by usurping others' rights.

These examples demonstrate that the Islamic social system has to be applied in its totality, for it does not function if any of its components are left out. By the "Islamic social system" I mean Islamic Shari'a, which includes all Islamic creeds, beliefs, acts of worship, rituals, ethics, values, traditions, and laws. In other words, laws are but one element of this system.⁽¹⁾ It is important to note here that applying Islamic Shari'a laws does not mean the same thing as establishing a Muslim society. Laws do not make nations, unless they are supported by an ideology taken to heart by the citizens who decide to change themselves first: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (Holy Qur'an, 13:11).

For the Islamic social system to succeed in our society, we need to start at the level of the individual. We need individuals who believe in the justice established by this Islamic system. We need Muslim judges who believe in the holiness of this system, and would, therefore, never attempt to manipulate its texts to gain power or to appease the government. We need an executive national authority that pro-

(1) See *Malāmiḥ al-Muslim alladhi Nanshuduhu* (Features of the Muslim We Want) by Al-Qaradawi, Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, Pages 157-188.

tests this system and applies it without nepotism, favoritism, or corruption. In short, we need to establish the Islamic spirit, and to build the Islamic moral character, which would bear the responsibility of applying the system and adopt an Islamic world view that sees everything through the lens of Islam. We need to start by raising a Muslim generation with a clear understanding of their religion and an unyielding faith in their hearts. This would be a generation devoted to worshipping Allah and working accordingly to benefit themselves and their communities. It is this generation that will bring Islam back to its international leadership role. None of these goals can be achieved without determination to restore Islam, all of Islam, in our hearts and minds.

The vast majority of the values, traditions, and social systems in our lives today are the result of European colonization. The colonial powers used every means to eliminate genuine Islamic values, traditions, and social systems. For our societies to be truly liberated, they have to undergo a comprehensive ideological change that would bring us back to the truths we have forgotten: “And be not like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves” (Holy Qur’an, 59:19).

In summary, Islam is a comprehensive, living system that has to be applied as an indivisible whole, just as it was revealed, and just as the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions applied it. Each component of this system is necessary for the other components to function. The Islamic belief system is the foundation of all Muslim acts of worship, which in turn establish Islamic ethics. Islamic ethics supports the application of Islamic jurisprudence, which protects and helps to develop the state. Of course, the state promotes and protects all of these components. This is why the Holy Qur’an warns against ignoring any of Allah’s commandments: “And judge, [Oh Mohammed], between them by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations and beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you” (5:49).

We also have the example of the Israelites, who believed in some commandments, but not others: “So do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you except disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 2:85). When a group of Jews wanted to convert to Islam, they made it a condition that they would maintain some of their traditions, such as the Sabbath. The Holy Qur’an, however, made it categorically clear that there is only one choice, namely accepting Islam in its totality: “Oh you who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy” (Holy Qur’an, 2:208).⁽¹⁾

(1) See *Sharf at al-Islām Ṣāliḥa lit-Taṭbīq fī kul Zamān wa-Makān* (the Islamic Shari’a is Applicable in all Times and Places) by Al-Qaradawi, Maktabat Wahba, 5th Edition, 1997, Pages 133-136.

Chapter 2:

Research on Ethics

2.1 History Of Moral Philosophy In The West

One of the first Arab scholars to focus on the historical development of moral philosophy in the West is Ahmed Amin, particularly his book *Ethics*. He offers a concise summary of the history of moral philosophy from the European Renaissance to modern times. He writes:

The Rise Of Sophism

The Ancient Greeks were probably the first to study moral philosophy, even though the early Greek philosophers focused more on nature and cosmology. The Sophists (400-450 B.C.) were actually the first to focus on moral philosophy. The word “Sophist” is derived from the Ancient Greek word “sophós”, which means “wise man”. They were mostly teachers of rhetoric and philosophy with different perspectives on the subjects they taught. However, they shared one objective, namely preparing young men to become good free citizens who serve their country honorably. To achieve this goal, they studied the nature of morality and criticized traditional views on the subject, which caused the conservatives at the time, and later Plato, to view their work as controversial. The Sophists were often accused of manipulating language to reverse truth values, and eventually the word “sophist” became synonymous with deception, even though their contributions were probably more insightful than those of their contemporaries.

Socrates

Socrates (399-469 B.C.) did not pay much attention to the traditional research areas of philosophic enquiry, such as the genesis of the world, and cosmology. Rather, he focused on morality and interpersonal relationships. This is why it is often said that Socrates transcended philosophy. Socrates is considered the father of moral philosophy, because he was the first to look into human interactions from a scientific perspective. In fact, one of his main arguments is that human interactions cannot be valid unless they are based on scientific criteria. He went as far as claiming that virtue is in itself a science. It is not clear how Socrates viewed moral objectives though. In other words, we do not know for sure what criteria Socrates used to judge actions as moral or immoral, which led to the development of various schools of philosophy based on Socrates’ work with different, and at times conflicting, perspectives on the matter.

Notable among the new Socratic schools of philosophy are the Cynics and the Cyrenaics. The Cynics’ school was founded by Antisthenes (444-370 B.C.), and its main views include the following: (a) the gods are beyond needs, (b) the best among people are those who adopt the moral values of the gods, thus reducing

their physical efforts, being satisfied with what they have, forbearing in the face of hardships, and being indifferent to the vicissitudes of life. They believed that one could progress toward flourishing and clarity through ascetic practices, which would help achieve freedom from influences such as wealth, fame, and power, as long as they were virtuous. Diogenes of Sinope (412-323 B.C.) was one of the most prominent Cynics. He practiced and taught austerity and the rejection of social traditions. For example, he would wear rough clothes, eat poor quality food, and sleep on the floor. The Cyrenaics School, on the other hand, was founded by Aristippus, who was born in Cyrene, Barqa in North Africa. Unlike the Cynics, the Cyrenaics were hedonists, who viewed physical pleasure and avoiding suffering to be the ultimate goal of life. For them, work is a virtue, because it is more pleasurable than painful.

Plato

Plato (427-347 B.C.) was an Athenian philosopher and a student of Socrates. Many of his writings that have survived are in the form of dialogues, such as his most well-known book *The Republic*. His views on morality are spread across his works, which mix philosophical arguments with dialogues. Plato's views on morality are all based on Idealism. For him, there is a spiritual world beyond the material world, and every individual in the material world has an abstract counterpart in the ideal, or spiritual, world. For example, good is an ideal that exists in its true abstract, or ideal, form only in the ideal world, but to understand these ideals, one has to be a philosopher. Plato recognized that the inner self has different types of powers, and argued that virtue can develop only when these powers are balanced and controlled by the mind. Plato argued that the essence of morality is a combination of four values: wisdom, courage, justice, and virtue. For him, these are the foundations of success for individuals and nations alike. For nations, wisdom is the ideal of rulers; courage is the ideal of soldiers; virtue is the ideal of the citizens; and justice is the ideal of everyone. In other words, there are different ideals for different people based on their function in society, and each individual is required to achieve his ideal. For individuals, wisdom is the ideal that one uses to navigate life; courage is necessary to fight evil; virtue is for resisting excessive indulgence in pleasures; and justice is the ideal that motivates people to collaborate with others for the public good.

Aristotle And The Peripatetic School

Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), who was a student of Plato, established his own school of philosophy. "Peripatetic", which is the adjective ascribed to Aristotle's followers, is derived from "peripatoi" which refers to the colonnades of the Lyceum in Athens where he met with his students. The term could also have been derived

from a similar Greek word, “peripatetikos” which refers to walking, as Aristotle often taught while walking. For Aristotle, happiness is the ultimate goal of the soul, but his view of happiness is drastically different from the way it is interpreted by modern materialists, as the only way to achieve happiness, according to Aristotle, is to use one’s conscience to make the best choices possible. One of Aristotle’s main contributions is his Theory of Balance, which argues that every virtue is the balance between two evils. For example, generosity is a virtue, but it is the balance between stinginess and extravagance, while courage is a virtue that is the balance between cowardice and foolhardiness. We will discuss this theory in some detail in a later section on moral ideals.

The Stoics And The Epicureans

These two groups of philosophers brought about a major rift in philosophic thought. The Stoics founded their school on the views of the Cynics, whom we discussed earlier. Many Greek and Roman philosophers adopted their views, including Seneca (6 B.C.-65 A.D.), Epictetus (60-140 A.D.), and Marcus Aurelius (121-180 A.D.). The Epicureans, on the other hand, followed the Cyrenaics. The founder of the Epicurean School was Epicurus, whose ideas influenced the works of many modern philosophers, such as Pierre Gassendi (1592-1655) who established a school in France to revive the teachings of Epicurus. Many renowned French intellectuals studied in this school, including Molière.

The Spread Of Christianity In Europe

Christianity spread across Europe toward the end of the 3rd Century, thus changing belief systems and propagating the moral values of the Torah. Christianity taught the peoples of Europe that God is the source of morality, for He sets moral criteria that help judge actions as good or evil. Accordingly, people adhered to these values in their interactions in compliance with God’s commandments.

European Christianity placed saints and holy men in the social positions historically held by Greek philosophers. Many Christian teachings were in line with Greek philosophy, especially the works of the Stoics. The main difference was the motivation for being virtuous. While the Greek philosophers saw wisdom and knowledge as the motives for virtue, Christianity had God’s love and faith as the motives for virtue. Another similarity between Christianity and Stoicism is the idea that people have to struggle against their inner selves to reach a purer state, in which the soul controls the body and its desires. This is why many Christians tended to adopt monasticism and asceticism.

Ethics In The Middle Ages

During the Middle Ages, the European Church did not approve of Greek and Roman philosophies, sciences, and secular views, including works on moral philosophy. For the Church, religion was thought to be divinely inspired: everything that God has commanded is inherently good, and God's word is the ultimate truth. The Church thus concluded that the philosophical quest for the truth is meaningless and heretic. The only philosophical works that were permitted were ones that supported religious faith and the Church. For example, some Church scholars conducted research on the works of Plato, Aristotle, and the Stoics to support Christianity and develop logical arguments in support of religion. All the philosophical works that contradicted the Church were discarded. As a result, most of the works on moral philosophy from that era are a mix of Greek and Christian teachings, such as the works of Pierre Abélard (1079-1142) and Thomas Aquinas (1226-1374).

The Science of Ethics In Modern Times

The European Renaissance started in Italy in the second half of the 15th Century as scholars revived Greek philosophy. As the Renaissance spread across Europe, a new era of intellectual pursuit flourished, and all knowledge available in Europe at the time became subject to much criticism and rethinking. Greek moral philosophy was critiqued and revived in light of newly developed empirical sciences, such as sociology and psychology. This revival led to significant changes in the hierarchy of moral values, as virtue was no longer the main moral value in the way it was seen during the Middle Ages, and social justice emerged as the main concern of the field. The objectives of moral philosophy also changed, as social reform, especially the issues of youth, women, and children, became crucial for the individual's well-being. This new approach to moral philosophy established new perspectives on social rights and obligations and focused on the individual's responsibility as a member of society.

René Descartes (1596-1650), the founder of modern philosophy, established new principles for scientific and philosophic investigation. These included:

- Facts cannot be taken for granted unless empirically attested. Any ideas that are based only on conjecture, traditions, or guesswork have to be rejected.
- Scientific investigation needs to be graded from the simpler to the more complex.
- A hypothesis can be verified only through testing.

Descartes and his followers adopted the views of the Stoics, whereas Pierre Gassendi and Thomas Hobbes preferred Epicurus' perspectives. Later on, Shaftes-

bury and Hutchinson argued for a human instinct that detects good and evil, which is similar to the instinct that help people distinguish beauty. Modern philosophers and scientists have disagreed significantly on the existence of such instincts.

The 19th Century was a turning point in the history of western philosophy. For example, Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) critiqued Epicureanism to develop Pragmatism, thus shifting from personal happiness to public happiness. Their views were widely accepted and adopted into policy-making and legislation. Thomas Hill Green (1836-1882) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) applied the Theory of Evolution to moral philosophy as discussed earlier. German philosophers who had a significant influence on the development of western moral philosophy include Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677), Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), and Immanuel Kant (1724-1831). In France, Victor Cousin (1792-1867) and Auguste Comte (1798-1857) were the most influential. While we cannot discuss all European philosophical views here, we can conclude that moral philosophy has not changed much since John Stuart Mill and Herbert Spencer, as the field mostly focuses on analyzing and studying previous theories rather than developing new ones.”⁽¹⁾

(1) See *A Short History of Morals* by J. M. Robertson, and *History of Ethics* by Sidgwick and see *Al-Akhlāq* (Ethics) by Ahmed Amin, Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Araby, 1969, Pages 131-139.

2.2 Modern Moral Philosophies In The West

Introduction

In this section, I will focus on non-Islamic moral philosophies, particularly Tawfiq Al-Tawil's objective account in his book *Falsafat Al-Akhlāq: Nash'athā wa-taṭawwuruhā* (*Moral Philosophy: Its Rise And Development*). Al-Tawil writes:

"I have focused thus far on tracing the historical development of moral ideals to achieve two main goals: (a) to emphasize the significance of the topic under consideration, and (b) to present the main perspectives on it. Before discussing the role moral values play in human leadership, particularly in modern philosophies, it is important to note that moral philosophy does not study human behavior per se, unless this behavior is the result of thinking and free will, both of which are the foundations of moral responsibility.

While no scholars in the field have denied human intellect and the ability to think, many have denied the existence of free will. Therefore, determinism presupposes the lack of moral values that people can adhere to. Moreover, any human behavior that occurs under duress is beyond the scope of moral philosophy. In other words, human action cannot be considered from a moral philosophical stand point unless it meets the following criteria: (a) it is a goal-oriented behavior, (b) it reflects a free will, and (c) it can be morally judged.

These criteria play a significant role in distinguishing philosophical views on moral judgments. For example, Naturalists believe that morals are relative, particular, and constantly changing. For them, moral values are not the same thing as being interested in particular types of actions and having a preference for them, which in turn would suggest that moral values are subjective. Rather, moral values, such as the truth, goodness, and beauty require a means to achieve an end. While Idealists share this view of moral values, they argue for the existence of ulterior ideals underlying human actions. These ideals are independent of the agent, i.e. they are absolute ideas that go beyond time and space. These ideas are sought out as objectives in their own right, such as freedom, human dignity, peace, love, justice, a comfortable life, and safety from fear, hunger, anxiety, and sickness.

As we discuss the role of moral values in human leadership, it is also important to note that any survey of history demonstrates that moral values, whether relative particulars or absolute ideals, have a significant impact on human life and the path of history. There is hardly any contemporary philosophical view that underestimates this role. The following is a summary of modern philosophical perspectives on the subject during the 19th and 20th centuries.

On Marxism

Marxists see history to be a subject of objective laws, rather than the will of individuals. This is the Marxist view of Historical Determinism, which views economics as the determining factor in historical change. Spiritual factors, such as philosophy, art, literature, and religion are seen as mere consequences of economics. It is the means of production, according to Marx (1883), that determine the political, intellectual, and social conditions of society, not the other way around. This view is also known as Historical Materialism, which Marxists claim to be the driving force of human history that determines historical evolution. It is economics that determines intellectual activity, culture, and what Idealists claim to be moral ideals. For Marxists, moral values cannot be attributed to God or human intellect, because human intellect, in their view, is a consequence of economics. In other words, morals are a reflection of relative production relationships. This contradicts the view that argues for morals as a motive for human behavior and social change. For Marxists, individuals cannot change history.

The dominant psychological theories at the turn of the 20th Century saw human will as the most influential power that controls motives, desires, and actions. However, Marx rejected these theories and posited, instead, that human will is determined by natural and social laws. In other words, human will is not independent of external factors as claimed by the Idealists. For Marxists, human will is the result of knowledge, experience, and education. In fact, Marx's work is itself the consequence of the laws that determine historical development, for absolute human values cannot exist in a society rife with social class conflict. Ideals are possible only in a society where ownership does not exist, and people no longer take advantage of each other. This is the hope of Communism.”⁽¹⁾

Al-Tawil responds to Marxism as follows:

“Nobody can deny the impact of economics on the development of history, but there might be other factors that are even more influential, all of which have to do with humans functioning as the makers of history. It is human will and power that changes everything, even economics, according to spiritual interpretations of history, which I believe to be closer to the truth. History can be interpreted only in light of the interaction of spiritual and materialistic factors. While Marx excludes moral values from the factors that determine the development of history, we find him planning for the future. Marx criticized philosophy for attempting to explain the world, and argued that the function of philosophy is to change the world. According to Marx's view, the world eventually changes people, who in turn intro-

(1) See *Falsafat Al-Akhlaq: Nash'athā wa-taṭawwuruhā* (Moral Philosophy: Its Rise and Development) by Tawfiq Al-Tawil, Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiyya, 3rd Edition, Pages 478-480.

duce new laws that affect the progress of history. However, Marx missed the fact that it is people who produce philosophy that incurs all these other changes.

While Marx denied free will for individuals, he encouraged his followers to fight against their religious and social traditions. He did not wait for the inevitable end of class conflict. Rather, he called for revolutions to end Capitalism and establish Communism. Yet, he still insisted that individuals have no free will. One can argue that revolutions are the work of societies, rather than particular individuals. However, this argument does not hold because societies do not move without leaders who have the will to direct social movements. Later Marxists revisited many of Marx's errors, including the fact that Mao Tse-tung, who was the principal Chinese Marxist theorist, ruled one quarter of the world's population. This was a clear example that individual will can affect historical change."⁽¹⁾

As Muslims, we do not deny the impact of economics on the development of history. In fact, we see the Holy Qur'an asserting this claim, as it prohibits infanticide out of fear of poverty: "Do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them" (Holy Qur'an, 6:151) and "Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin" (Holy Qur'an, 17:31). However, Islam does not treat economics as the only factor that dictates historical development. Belief systems are in fact more important than economics. While Marxists claim that if we want to change history, we have to change the economy or production relations, the Holy Qur'an says: "Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves" (13:11).

On French Positivism

Marx was not the only one to deny human will and moral ideals. The French Positivists emphasized the power of society at the expense of the individual, whom they saw as powerless. Emile Brehier (1952) describes Positivism as a view that sees people as mere puppets controlled by society. Positivism also excluded metaphysics as a field of study, thus eliminating moral ideals. Nevertheless, Auguste Comte, the founder of Positivism, was also planning for the future, as he claimed that philosophy can save France from destruction in the aftermath of the French Revolution. Emile Durkheim, a Positivist who established modern sociology, adopted a deterministic view that treats individuals as powerless members of a society that imposes its will. Durkheim treated moral values as social phenomena that are created and imposed by a collective mind. For him, people behave according to moral values only to gain social gratification. Again, Durkheim claimed that sociology was the

(1) Ibid, Pages 480-481.

only way to save France from deterioration in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. Just like Marxists, Positivists denied the willpower of the individual, but they did not see this as a contradiction to their attempts to plan for the future.”⁽¹⁾

As Muslims, we believe that society has a significant impact on the behavior of individuals. For example, the Holy Qur’an considers money to be a property of the whole society in the end: “Oh you who have believed, do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly” (4:29). However, the Holy Qur’an recognizes and emphasizes individual properties, hence the requirement of *Zakat* and the restrictions on certain types of spending: “Spend out of that in which He has made you successors” (57:7). Moreover, the Holy Qur’an clearly states that individuals are responsible for their actions, just like Adam’s son, who was responsible for murdering his own brother, even though there was no society then: “And his soul permitted him to murder his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers” (Holy Qur’an, 5:30).

On British Utilitarianism

Another influential school of philosophy at the time is Utilitarianism which developed in Britain. This school adopted Determinism, and as a result they denied many individual freedoms, including free will. The main argument of Utilitarianism is that individuals are required to do whatever achieves happiness to the largest number of people. They excluded all other moral values and ideals. Utilitarianism was quite popular, and it dominated politics, arts, legislation, education, and other domains of social reform. The main proponents of this school were Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who essentially led social change in Britain at the time.

On American Pragmatism

While most Western European philosophies of the 19th Century downplayed the role of the individual and some even denied free will, others emphasized the individual and excluded what Idealists called moral ideals. For example, the American Pragmatists focused on practical values, even if they can be intellectually rejected. They also considered research on Classical philosophies and abstract intellectual argumentations a waste of time. William James (1842-1910), who was the founder of Pragmatism wrote: “Truth lives, in fact, for the most part on a credit system. Our thoughts and beliefs ‘pass’, so long as nothing challenges them, just as bank notes pass, so long as nobody refuses them. But this all points to direct face-to-face verifications somewhere, without which the fabric of truth collapses

(1) Ibid, Pages 481-182.

like a financial system with no cash-basis whatever.” John Dewey (1859-1952), another American Pragmatist, followed a Marxist view when he wrote: “Ideas are meaningless without actions that lead to reconfiguring the world we live in.” This pragmatic attitude was applied to aspects of life in the United States, leading to a materialistic society where things, actions, and ideas are valued only from a pragmatic perspective.”⁽¹⁾

On Social Darwinism

Following his summary of the major tenets of Social Darwinism in Europe, Al-Tawil writes: “To understand Social Darwinism, one only needs to read the works of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900). Both adopted Darwin’s Theory of Evolution and proposed different applications of the laws of survival, which were based on animal behavior, to human morality. Accordingly, moral values survive only if they withstand experience, while those moral values that cannot withstand experience eventually become extinct. For Spencer, the ultimate perfection of humanity is achieved only through human adaption to the environment, but this environment, according to Social Darwinism, is constantly progressing toward an ultimate goal, which in turn establishes harmony between the needs of the individual and those of society. However, Spencer claims that the ultimate goal of moral values contributes only to speeding up the progress that leads to social harmony. This progress, of course, requires planning and a free human will that carries out those plans. If natural selection is important, unnatural selection, which facilitates achieving one’s goals, is more important.

Nietzsche, on the other hand, was a revolutionary philosopher. He emphasized the individual will to the point where he reversed the hierarchy of moral values established by religion. For Nietzsche, the will to power is the focus of philosophy. He also applied the Theory of Evolution to moral values, but he denounced idealistic values, such as meekness, piety, and patience, and glorified evil values, such as aggression, cruelty, and self-assertion. In other words, Nietzsche deconstructed the traditional views of moral values, but he was also planning for the future. His ultimate goal was to bring about the “Übermensch” or “the superman”. However, Nietzsche was not convinced that natural selection would bring about the Übermensch, because he believed that nature favors average people over those who are different, thus bringing down superior individuals without making the average ones superior. The way for the future, according to Nietzsche, is to focus on education, and to make marriage a way of improving the genetic makeup in one’s offspring, rather than just reproduction.”⁽²⁾

(1) Ibid, Pages 482-483.

(2) Ibid, Pages 484-485.

We can conclude that Social Darwinism over-emphasized the power of society at the expense of the individual, even the distinguished ones. This view, however, contradicts what we all experience in our daily lives. We can see some individuals who are as influential by themselves as a group of 100 people, as in the hadith: "People are just like camels; out of 100, one can hardly find a single camel suitable to ride."⁽¹⁾ We even see poets describe some individuals as people who are worth "a thousand people", as in Abu Bakr Ibn Durayd and-Azdi who writes:

A thousand men can act like one,

But in hard times, one man can be worth a thousand

The Arabic proverb goes, "One person with might, brings a nation to the light."

Abu Nuwwas, the poet, writes:

It is no wonder that Allah, the One

Can put the world's might into one.

On Individualism

Some of Marx's contemporaries emphasized the individual's will and its role in directing personal life and social change. Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881) went against the views of his contemporary Positivists and sociologists. While they committed to relative values only and attributed them to society, rather than individuals, Carlyle argued that it is the individual hero who changes history and takes control of its direction. For Carlyle, one only needs to know the history of the heroes of any nation to understand its history.

He explained his theory in six lectures on models of heroes who led their nations.⁽²⁾ The 20th Century Historicists adopted many of Carlyle's views, such as the idea that the individual determines history."⁽³⁾

Carlyle presented Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as a model of the hero as a prophet. He writes: "A false man found a religion? Why, a false man cannot build

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (6498) and Muslim (2547).

(2) These lectures were published in *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and The Heroic in History*. The first lecture focuses on the role of Gods in polytheistic societies, particularly paganism in Scandinavian mythology. The second is about Prophet Mohammed and his contributions to the Muslim Ummah. The third lecture is "The Hero as Poet: Dante and Shakespeare." The fourth is entitled, "The Hero as Priest: Luther's reformation and Knox's Puritanism." The fifth is "The Hero as Man of Letters: Johnson, Rousseau, and Burns," and the sixth is "The Hero as King: Cromwell, and Napoleon." These lectures are on different models of leadership and heroes who changed their history of their societies.

(3) See *Falsafat Al-Akhlāq: Nash'athā wa-tatāwuwuruhā* (Moral Philosophy: Its Rise and Development) by Tawfiq Al-Tawil, Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiyya, 3rd Edition, Page 485.

a brick house! If he does not know and truly follow the properties of mortar, burnt clay and whatever else he works in, it is no house that he makes, but a rubbish heap. It will not stand for 12 centuries to lodge 180 million; it will fall straightway.” Thus, Carlyle defends Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) as a prophet who established a religion and a nation that could not be destroyed.

As we saw in this summary, most of the 19th and early 20th century philosophies devalued human will, thus downplaying the role of moral ideals in human life. Nevertheless, these philosophies were still planning for the future, even though no planning can be without goals, and no goals can be set without values that determine the worthiness of such goals. Al-Tawil concludes that research on the history of thought clearly demonstrates that people play a critical role in developing their societies and directing their lives; otherwise, education and social reform would be nothing but an exercise in futility. Moreover, people’s ability to change their lives and develop their societies presupposes a free will.

On Existentialism

Existentialist philosophers took quite a unique perspective, as they rejected the idea that individuals are subject to social determinism or even scientific objectivity. Instead, they focused only on individual freedom to the point of equating personal freedom to existence. Accordingly, existentialists discarded all moral values imposed by social authority, because, for them, one’s choices and actions do not need to be restricted by objectives, motives, or intellect. Thus, Existentialist philosophers rejected all the moral values that are based on religion, tradition, and political authorities. For them, not being restricted by these values is freedom. For us, however, human life cannot function without a moral compass.⁽¹⁾

It is my view that Existentialism is inherently extreme in the sense that it evolved as a reaction to other philosophical views that went too far in emphasizing social power over individuals. Existentialists and their opponents alike did not try to find a middle ground or a compromise to reach a better understanding of the human condition, which requires divine knowledge and wisdom: “Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?” (Holy Qur’an, 67:14).

On Marx And Nietzsche

Moral philosophers have been particularly intrigued by the diversity of moral values across philosophical traditions. It is not clear which moral values are most critical to determining history, or which are best fitted to guide humanity in our

(1) Ibid, 486

time. In a series of BBC broadcasts on *The Makers of the Modern Spirit*, Professor John Macmurray of Edinburgh University (1891-1976) concluded his series with an interesting comparison between Marx and Nietzsche. He argued that in our modern times, the world has come to a point where it has to follow either Marx or Nietzsche. Nietzsche's philosophy stems from an aristocratic view which aims to limit access to a comfortable life to the bourgeoisie (or the super-humans), whereas Marx comes from a populist view which aims to make access to a comfortable life available to all people. H. G. Wood refers to Macmurray's comparison in the conclusion of his 1933 book *The Truth and Error of Communism*. Wood argues that both Marx and Nietzsche intentionally rejected Christianity; therefore, neither is capable of leading humanity, because – in his view – leading humanity has to be engrained in Christianity.

Dr. Al-Tawil comments that “if Wood were a devout Muslim, he would have made Islam a necessary requirement for leading humanity, and if he were a proponent of Plato, he would have required Platonism as a requirement for leading humanity. In fact, if he believed in empirical science, he would have required technology to be such a requirement.”⁽¹⁾

Our goal is to help people return to Islam and its comprehensive moral system, which covers all aspects of human life, no matter how seemingly insignificant. This is a moral system that balances the spiritual and the material, religion and life, the individual and society, rights and obligations, realism and idealism, and self-interests and goodness.

On Aristotle, Nietzsche, And Stoicism

It is very interesting to compare the ideals manifested in Aristotle's “ideal man” and Nietzsche's *Übermensch* on the one hand, and the Stoic ideal which was a precursor of Christian sainthood on the other. Aristotle's “ideal man” is proud; he would not flee to avoid confronting a threat. Rather, the ideal man would sacrifice himself instead of acting cowardly. This ideal man is also kind to others, but this kindness is motivated by pride. However, he would not accept help from others. He would even act in defiance of those in higher positions and express his feelings of love and hatred publicly, because hiding one's feelings is seen as cowardly. However, Aristotle limits the possibility of becoming an “ideal man” to kings and nobility only.

Nietzsche's *Übermensch* (or superman) is a strong-willed warrior who prefers to be in control. For Nietzsche, mercifulness, meekness, patience, and obedience are the moral values of slaves. These are the same moral values of Christianity,

(1) Ibid, 487

which holy men adopted to maintain their influence on the masses. They are also the same moral values adopted by the Jews, who suffered persecution at the hands of the Romans. Nietzsche and Aristotle share a disdain of weakness and equality. They also share the glorification of power and pride. However, Nietzsche went further, as his ideal man (or *Übermensch*) is a tyrant who lives according to the rules of the jungle. The Stoics and the Christian holy men, however, took a different approach which adopted meekness, peacefulness, and humility as their core moral values. They glorified equality between free people and slaves, while making virtue and morality accessible to both groups, because they are all the children of God. Stoicism, however, preceded Christianity in denouncing slavery and forbidding the death penalty.

We have to admit that all these philosophers can be seen as products of their societies. Aristotle was quite likely influenced by his experiences in Alexander the Great's court, while Nietzsche was heavily influenced by the rise of German militaristic nationalism at the time. The Stoics were also influenced by the Hellenistic spirit of their time. However, they have all had a significant impact on the philosophical traditions that followed them. For example, the reconciliatory approach developed by Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274 CE) presented Aristotle as almost infallible to the Christian world. In the Muslim world, Aristotle was "The First Teacher". In fact, Ibn Miskawayh (932-1030 A.H.) wrote what is probably the most comprehensive treatise of his time on moral philosophy, quoting Aristotle and relying heavily on his works. The Stoics were so influential in the Christian world that Christian intellectuals considered Stoic philosophy an introduction to Christianity. In the Muslim world, Ikhwan Al-Safa and other Sufi scholars were also heavily influenced by Stoicism.

Nietzsche's influence cannot be underestimated. It is often thought that his call to assume power and attack those who are weak was used as a justification for World War I. Nietzsche's philosophy has in fact shaped the world as we know it today. However, things have changed, as people from different countries have collaborated in the causes of peace, freedom, and justice, resulting in the establishment of the League of Nations in 1919, and later the United Nations in 1945. While the League of Nations failed to achieve its mission, the United Nations is becoming increasingly capable of securing a better future."⁽¹⁾

Conclusion

We have summarized some of the main philosophical views that deal with moral values and commented on how they contradict each other. We have also discussed

(1) Ibid, 487-490

how some of these views downplay certain values which their opponents see as indispensable. Dr. Abd Al-Halim Mahmoud, Professor of Philosophy at Al-Azhar University, comments that: "Philosophy has no set view. It offers an argument and its contradiction, and every view attempts to refute its predecessors. While studying philosophy, all we can say is that philosophy is a reflection of the human condition. No matter how much knowledge people may have, they are still humans with limited knowledge, limited insight, and weak willpower. People are born without a choice and they also die without a choice. Allah says: 'And mankind has not been given of knowledge except a little'" (Holy Qur'an, 17:85).⁽¹⁾

It is important to note in our conclusion that the differences among philosophical perspectives are not about the nature of moral values, but about their interpretations and research methodologies. In the end, all philosophers of moral values appreciate morality, even the ones who claim to be amoral. The latter were only denouncing the moral values they deemed ineffective while promoting others which they thought to be more important.

To conclude, humans are the only creatures that can get bored with the status quo and look forward to a better life. This better life is a reflection of their values. Therefore, we can conclude that humans are the only creatures that cannot live without the ideals they believe in.⁽²⁾

In the name of Islam, which Allah describes in "This day I have perfected for you your religion and completed My favor upon you and have approved for you Islam as religion" (Holy Qur'an, 5:3), and in the name of the original resources of Islam, the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, we say that humans are the only creatures that have reason, free will, insights, and sound instincts. Humans are the only creatures to whom Allah has sent a messenger with a scripture that establishes justice and teaches people about religion, social interactions, and morality. This scripture shines light into the hearts of the faithful, brings them peace, and keeps evil away from them. For example, Allah says: "They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, 'In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:219). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "There should be no injury, nor return of injury."⁽³⁾ While scholars may dispute the validity of this hadith, it is considered sound because it reiterates many Qur'anic verses, such as: "Let no scribe be harmed or any witness" (2:282) and "Do not harm them [women] in order to oppress them" (65:6). The hadith and the Holy

(1) See Mahmoud, Abd Al-Halim (AH 1400), *Al-Falsafa (Philosophy)*. *Majallat Al-Buḥūth*, 5:141.

(2) See *Falsafat Al-Akhlaq: Nash'athā wa-taṭawwuruhā* (Moral Philosophy: Its Rise and Development) by Tawfiq Al-Tawil, Cairo: Dar Al-Nahda Al-Arabiyya, 3rd Edition, Pages 490-491.

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (2865), Ibn Majah via Ibn Abbas (2381), and Al-Darqutni via Abu Said Al-Khudri (3/77).

Qur'an aim to make religion easier for people: "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" (2:185), "Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful" (5:6), and "And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak" (4:28).

2.3 Pre-Islamic Arab Moral Philosophy

Pre-Islamic Arabs did not have a moral philosophy in the sense of an academic field. In fact, as a bedouin society, they did not have much in terms of science or philosophy in general. Rather, they had a well-defined set of practical moral values, which their elders taught and their poets praised. Examples of these moral values can be seen in the wise sayings of Aktham Ibn Saify, in Zuhayr Ibn Janab Al-Kalbi's advice to his sons, and in the poetry of Zuhayr Ibn Abi Salma, Antara Al-Absi, Hatim Al-Ta'i, Al-Nabigha Al-Dhubiani, Al-Samaw'al, and epic writers, among others.

Examples of wise sayings include:

- *He who walks down a paved road does not stumble.*
- *The worst of opinions is that which comes from desire.*
- *Distrusting others keeps you safe.*
- *Stay away from evil, and it will stay away from you.*

We also see wisdom expressed in poetry, such as the works of Imri'u Al-Qays who writes:

*If it is not a camel, a goat would do,
It would fill our house with milk and ghee.
All the riches you need are a full stomach and water.*

Amir Ibn Al-Tufayl Al-`Amiri writes on pride:

*Even though I am the son of the master of Bani Amir,
And I am their knight, well known for my shining armor,
It is not for my lineage the Amirs made me their master.
Allah has made me a knight thanks to no family or forefather.
I fend for them and do no harm, while their enemies taste my spear.*

Zuhays writes in his epic:

*How admirable is a lad who is quiet,
Who talks only when it is right.
A man is half tongue and half heart.
The rest is nothing but blood and flesh part.*

He also writes:

Those who can afford to give but withhold

They will be shamed and their merits never told.

Those who do not protect their own, others will destroy.

And those who do not hurt others shall be everyone's toy.

This last line speaks volumes of Pre-Islamic Arab extremism, as they praised doing injustice to others as a form of self-defense. Such poetry and words of wisdom are not what we would consider a philosophy, but they are what Al-Shahristani (d. 1153 CE) calls "traditional thoughts".⁽¹⁾ While the Arabs adopted these values for generations, they were still considered one of the most moral societies at the time, as they did not indulge in the evils that were prevalent in other societies. Perhaps their moral culture is one of the reasons why the Prophet (PBUH) came from this community and why these Pre-Islamic Arabs later became his companions and the ones to spread his message to the world: "Allah is most knowing of where He places His message" (Holy Qur'an, 6:124).

Examples Of Pre-Islamic Arab Moral Values

1. Generosity

Generosity is the moral value Pre-Islamic Arabs were most known for. In fact, no other culture has placed such emphasis on generosity. Pre-Islamic Arabs considered generosity a sign of honor and a requirement for leadership. Hatim Al-Ta'i, who was the epitome of generosity in Arab culture, writes:

They accuse me of wasting my money,

But if I do not give it away, I would be nobody.

The value of generosity was particularly appreciated during times of hardship, especially when food and water were scarce. It was at such times that people would compete to offer whatever they had. Hatim Al-Ta'i is said to have slaughtered his own horse to feed his community when they ran out of food, but he would not touch it.

Arab hospitality is a form of generosity that they practiced whenever they had guests, regardless of the social status of tribal affiliations of those guests. This value was closely associated with the harsh living conditions and constant trav-

(1) See *Al-Milal wa-Al-Nihāl* (The Book of Sects and Creeds) by Al-Shahrastani. Matba'at Mu'assasat Al-Halabi: 2/118.

eling in the unforgiving desert that had no places for people to rest and get food. The most generous among the Arabs would go out of their way to seek out travelers and invite them in, and offer to provide them with whatever they needed. They would build bonfires on top of hills to guide travelers to their homes. Hatim Al-Ta'i once said to his slave:

Build a fire, for it is a cold windy night.

Maybe someone in need will see the light.

If a guest comes, you are a free man.

2. Courage

Courage is the cultural counterpart of generosity. A generous person gives his property to those in need, whereas a courageous person is willing to give his life in defense of his community. Both generosity and courage were highly regarded in Pre-Islamic Arab culture, and they were seen as essential characteristics of leadership. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry includes many examples of poets taking pride in their courage, such as Al-Samaw'al who writes:

None of our free men dies against his will.

And none of our dead is waiting for revenge still.

Our blood drips only at the edge of swords.

3. Pride

Pride was another essential moral value in Pre-Islamic Arab culture, and their pride extended to include that of their community. Antara Ibn Shaddad writes:

Do not give me the water of life with humiliation.

But Give me a cup of bitter colocynth with pride.

4. Gallantry

Gallantry was a deeply rooted moral characteristic in Pre-Islamic Arab culture. They defined gallantry as helping those in need, protecting the weak, and upholding their agreements. They saw gallantry as a defining characteristic of manhood and humanity. In fact, the Arabic word for "neighbor" is derived from the word for "gallantry" because those who needed protection would live next to those known for their gallantry. Yazid Ibn Hamman Al-Sakuni writes:

They are generous when the skies are not.

You cannot tell who is a neighbor and who is not.

5. Chastity

Pre-Islamic Arabs had a high regard for the virtue of chastity, which they often defined as protecting the honor and properties of others. Antara Ibn Shaddad writes:

I visit my neighbor's wife as long as her husband is around.

But when he goes to war, I stay away until he is back.

If I see my neighbor's wife I fix my eyes to the ground

Until she goes into her house and her door is not open a crack.

He also writes:

Dear Malik's daughter, ask the horses if you do not know.

Those who were at the battle can tell you: In the fight I never follow.

But when it is time to take bounty, I do not touch any and I feel no sorrow.

Pre-Islamic Moral Problems

Aside from the good moral values described above, Pre-Islamic Arab societies were plagued with certain vices, such as drinking alcohol, which they had over 100 names for, and gambling, which involved gambling with one's family, not just money. Pre-Islamic Arab societies also allowed usury, and it seems that Jews were the first to promote it and then it became a social norm. However, the social evil with the direst consequences was tribalism, as Pre-Islamic Arabs fought for their tribes whether it was for a just cause or otherwise. Durayd Ibn Al-Samma describes tribalism in his poetry:

I am but a man from Guzayya and with them I abide.

I fight if they fight, not knowing why, but it is my side.

Amr Ibn Kalthoum writes in his famous epic:

There are so many of us, we filled the land.

In the sea, our ships make no room for more.

We drink from the spring only if the water is clear.

Others have to wait and drink the muddy water.

Yes, we are unjust and nobody can harm us.

We will always be preemptive when it is time to attack.

Once our babies are weaned, other tribes have to bow to them.

The View of Islam Toward Pre-Islamic Values

Allah has blessed the Arabs by choosing one of them to be His messenger who would recite the Book to them and teach them wisdom and religion. For Islam to develop in this environment, it had to eradicate social evils using various strategies such as guidance, education, and legislation. The best Pre-Islamic values were maintained in Islam, but they were redefined to become associated with ultraistic motivation. Islam also introduced new moral values in this community, some of which were considered immoral in Pre-Islamic Arabia. Since it is not possible to discuss all the changes which Islam incurred in the Arabian moral structure in this section, a brief summary will be sufficient.

1. The main motive for moral behavior in Pre-Islamic Arabia was fear of social shaming and the desire to be praised, as Hatim Al-Ta'i states in his poetry:

I served my guests and stayed hungry all day,

For I feared what others might say.

Islam introduced a new motivation for moral behavior, namely fulfilling one's duty toward Allah and seeking His reward. Thus, Islam recognizes generosity and courage only if they are in the name of Allah: "Oh you who have believed, do not invalidate your charities with reminders or injury as does one who spends his wealth [only] to be seen by the people and does not believe in Allah and the Last Day. His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare" (Holy Qur'an, 2: 264).

When the Prophet (PBUH) was asked about those who fight for their own glory and reputation or for war booty, he said: "He who fights for Allah's word to become Superior, is the one striving in Allah's Cause."⁽¹⁾

2. The Arabs in Pre-Islamic Arabia had no lofty goals in life; their main concerns were immediate gratification, pleasure, and maintaining their reputation. Islam introduced new goals, such as serving Allah on His earth, teaching others about religion, and striving in the cause of good. We see this change in Rab'i Ibn Amir's address to Rustum, the King of Persia: "We are a people whom Allah has chosen to move away from serving other people to serving Allah alone, and from the injustices of polytheism to the justice of Islam."⁽²⁾
3. The moral structure of Arabian society changed dramatically with the introduction of Islam, as the individual's horizon expanded beyond the limits of

(1) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari by Al-Bukhari in his chapter on knowledge (123) and Muslim on leadership (1904).

(2) See *Tārikh Al-Tabari* (Al-Tabari's History), 2/401.

the tribe. In fact, the individual's identity was redirected from affiliation to the tribe to affiliation with the Ummah, as we see in Nihar Ibn Tawsi' a Al-Yashkari's poetry:

I have no father but Islam.

Let others brag about their tribes.

In Pre-Islamic Arabian culture, people were called by their tribal names, but with Islam they are called "Oh, you who have believed". With Islam, Muslims have become members of an international community which shares a creed and a sense of fraternity. This is a community based on equality and justice regardless of familial and tribal affiliations: "When you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative" (Holy Qur'an, 6:125); "When you judge between people, do judge with justice" (Holy Qur'an, 4:58); and "Do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just" (Holy Qur'an, 5:9). The Prophet (PBUH) was once asked about tribalism. He said: "To support your people in an unjust cause."⁽¹⁾ He also said: "He who fights under the banner of a people who are blind [not knowing the cause for which they are fighting], who gets flared up with family pride, calls people to fight for their family honor, and supports his kith and kin - if he is killed [in this fight], he dies as one belonging to the days of Jahiliyya [Pre-Islamic culture]."⁽²⁾

4. Islam introduced new moral values that Pre-Islamic Arabs disdained or did not acknowledge, such as earning one's living through an honorable job, even if it were gathering firewood. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "No food is better to man than that which he earns through his manual work. Dawud [King David] (PBUH), the Prophet of Allah, ate only out of the earnings of his manual work."⁽³⁾ Prophet David was a blacksmith who made armor and shields: "And We taught him [David] the fashioning of coats of armor to protect you from your [enemy in] battle" (Holy Qur'an, 21:80).

Another value that Islam introduced to Arabia is personal hygiene and cleanliness, for Allah praises cleanliness and beauty. This is why cleanliness is necessary for praying. Cleanliness here means the cleanliness of the body, the clothes, and the place where prayers take place, in addition to the ritual washing of ablution. The Prophet said: "Cleanliness constitutes one half of faith."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Narrated via Wathila Ibn Al-Asqa' by Ahmed (Sound; 16989), Abu Dawud on manners (5119), and Ibn Majah on social strife (3949).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on leadership (1848).

(3) Narrated via Al-Miqdam Ibn Ma'id Yakrub by Al-Bukhari on sales (2072) and Ibn Majah on commerce (2138).

(4) Narrated via Abu Malik Al-Ash'ari by Muslim in his chapter on cleanliness (223), Ahmed on prayers (22902), and Al-Tirmidhi, also on prayers, (3517).

Islam also introduced the freedom of independent scientific thinking and the freedom from blindly following traditions. Allah says: “Say, ‘I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought’” (Holy Qur’an, 34:46), and “Those who associated with Allah will say: ‘If Allah had willed, we would not have associated [anything] and neither would our fathers, nor would we have prohibited anything’. Likewise did those before deny until they tasted Our punishment. Say, ‘Do you have any knowledge that you can produce for us? You follow not except assumption, and you are not but falsifying’” (Holy Qur’an, 6:148).

Islam also introduced cooperation, obedience in good causes, and showing respect to the community: “And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression” (Holy Qur’an, 5:2). During the wars between the Muslims and the Persians in the Caliphate of Omar, the leader of the Persian army saw the Muslims pray in straight lines behind one Imam, whose movements they follow in synchrony. He was very angry to see this, and said: “Omar is killing me, for he taught those people good manners.”⁽¹⁾ Of course, the Persian leader did not know that it was the Prophet (PBUH) who taught the Muslims, including Omar, those manners.

5. Islam provided the Arabs with the Holy Qur’an, which is a comprehensive guide to morality, and the Prophet (PBUH), who was a living role model of this morality. Aisha, the Prophet’s (PBUH) wife, once said: “His [the Prophet’s] manners were the Holy Qur’an”, and Allah says: “There has certainly been for you in them an excellent pattern” (Holy Qur’an, 60:6). It was this morality, which the Prophet (PBUH) took from the Holy Qur’an and his companions adopted, that Islam spread across large swathes of the world. This morality made it possible for Muslims to rule with justice and mercy, thus establishing a great state that balanced the spiritual and the material, science and faith, and progress and morality.

(1) See *Tārikh Al-Tabari* (Al-Tabari’s History), 3/533.

2.4 Arab Moral Philosophy After Islam

The Muslim Ummah has developed as a representation of divine justice on earth. The Islamic moderation, which is a balance between extremism and secularism, is based on the heritage of all Allah's prophets, with the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah as its cornerstone. The Prophet (PBUH) led our world and established peace within the Ummah, where people felt equally safe at night as they did during the day. He left his Sunnah, which encompasses the sunnahs of the previous prophets, as a model that works for all people. While humanity has lost previous scriptures in part or whole, and in some cases they were distorted or altered, the Holy Qur'an remains intact. Allah has protected it, because unlike previous scriptures, it was not meant for a specific time period or place. The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, which Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scholars alike attest to their preservation, are the foundations of Islamic ethics.

Numerous studies have been conducted on the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah to understand what they tell us about creed, acts of worship, and legislation. Scholars have also focused on particular issues, such as the concepts of faith, work, and ethics. Of all these topics, ethics seems to be the one that functions as the core of all Islamic scholarship, as we see discussions of ethics in almost all scholarly works on the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, Islamic literature, and jurisprudence.

Muslim scholars started studying morality as early as the 2nd Century A.H., when they wrote such influential books such as *Al-Zuhd (Asceticism)* by Lukay' Ibn Al-Jarrah (d. 197 A.H.), *al-Zuhd wa al-Raqa'iq (Asceticism and the Softening of the Heart)* by Abdullah Ibn Al-Mubarak (d. 181 A.H.), *Al-Zuhd (Asceticism)* by Imam Ahmed Ibn Hanbal (d. 241 A.H.), *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad (The Book of Manners)* by Al-Bukhari (d. 256 A.H.), and many others. Notably, the titles of many such books include *al-zuhd* "asceticism" in their titles, because it was considered by many scholars at the time to be the ideal lifestyle. However, these books include detailed discussions of other aspects of morality, drawing on the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the lives of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions.

As for academic research on morality, it came much later. The reason is that Islam identified moral objectives and guided people through the process of achieving them. Islam also provided them with the standards of moral behavior and the criteria for moral judgment, namely the commandments in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. There was very little left for academic investigation, particularly in the cases where no texts provide clear moral judgments. In other words, most of the issues philosophers tend to be concerned with, such as the criteria of moral judgments and the definitions of good and evil, were already settled.

Later on, Islam came into contact with other cultures, and translations of phil-

osophical works from Greek, Persian, and Indian sources made their way into Islamic academic circles. As a result, new approaches to morality emerged, and they differed from each other depending on the cultures they were adopted from. Nevertheless, all these perspectives were heavily influenced by Islam. Four such perspectives can be easily identified: the philosophers, the Sufis, the Salafis, and the moderates.

A. Philosophical Tendency In Ethics

This tendency was developed by great Muslim scholars of philosophy. Those Muslim philosophers essentially followed the Peripatetic School, as they adopted Aristotle's views on mathematics, cosmology, and metaphysics. This approach was known as the Islamic Peripatetic School, which later incorporated Plato's philosophy. Most scholarly work within this school aimed to develop reconciliatory theories that incorporate the Muslim faith into the works of Plato and Aristotle. The main problem is that they treated philosophy, rather than faith, as the foundation of their work. If Islam was in agreement with philosophy, they did not see a problem, but if Islam contradicted the works of Aristotle and Plato, they reinterpreted Islam. However, Islam is not subject to interpretation.

The most influential scholars of the Islamic Peripatetic School are:

1. Abu Nasr Al-Farabi (d. 339 A.H.)

Al-Farabi was called the "Second Teacher," since Aristotle was the "First Teacher." Al-Farabi was the author of several influential volumes on philosophy, including *Ara' Al-Madina al-Fadila (The Views of the People of Utopia)*, in which he theorizes an ideal state along the lines of Plato's *Republic*. Al-Farabi was heavily influenced by Aristotle and Socrates, as he believed that happiness is the ultimate goal of moral philosophy, as opposed to self-interest, pleasure, or power. For him, happiness is a goal in and of itself, and it cannot be a means to a loftier goal. Happiness, for Al-Farabi, is to be free from materialism and to become a "complete mind", which can be achieved only through philosophical knowledge and good moral conduct.

2. Abu Ali Ibn Sina, Avicenna (d. 428 A.H.)

Abu Ali Ibn Sina, or Avicenna, was called the "Chief Sheikh", as he was one of the most renowned philosophers and physicians in Islamic history. He wrote many books that redefined science and philosophy, such as *Al-Isharat wa Al-Tanbihat (The Remarks and Admonitions)*, *Al-Qanoon (The Law of Medicine)*, and *Kitaab Al-Najah (The Book of Salvation)*. Avicenna's views on moral values are not different from those of his teacher, Al-Farabi, especially regarding happiness and virtue.

3. Ibn Miskawayh (d. 320 A.H.)

Ibn Miskawayh is the most famous of all Islamic philosophers who studied morality. He is the author of such celebrated works as *Tahdhib Al-Akhlaq* (*The Book on Refinement of Conduct*). In this book, Ibn Miskawayh provides a detailed analysis of morality while trying to develop a reconciliatory approach that incorporates the views of Plato, Aristotle, and Galenus into Islamic Shari'a. While he was not successful in some cases, his work is easily identifiable as Islamic. Ibn Miskawayh's analysis of happiness and virtue is not very different from those of AL-Farabi, Avicenna, and the Greek rationalists in general. His approach despises physical pleasures, and he blames common people who only do moral acts hoping for pleasure in heaven, even though those "common people" are in a better place than those who do not do their moral duty unless there is some pleasure to be gained in this world.

Ibn Miskawayh sees complete happiness to be attainable only when people die and transfer to a more honorable existence. This is when people realize that all worldly pleasures and happiness itself are meaningless, and should not have been paid any attention. Ibn Miskawayh saw happiness in contemplation and in discarding worldly pleasures, yet he rejected monasticism and asceticism, because, in his view, humans are social beings by their very nature. This attitude is a direct influence of Islamic theology, which promotes a balanced approach to life, as in the prayer: "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire" (Holy Qur'an, 2:201).

Love is the foundation of social virtue and the foundation of social obligation, which is why Muslims pray in groups in mosques five times a day, and this is why praying in groups is preferred to praying as individuals. These gatherings bring people together and promote love and peace among them. This is also why there are two eids to be celebrated in gatherings each year and why people are required to gather in holy places during the *Hajj*. In his book *Al-Nur Al-Asghar* (*The Minor Light*) Ibn Miskawayh argues that those who choose asceticism do injustice to others in society, because asceticism does not lead to productive activities. He writes: "It is only fair to help people, just as they help us, and to give back to society, just as it gives to us." Thus, cooperation is essential to achieve happiness. Every individual needs the support of the community, because people complement each other.

Summary

Generally speaking, Arab philosophic perspectives on morality that are based on Islam share some fundamental tenets:

- a. They view happiness as the ultimate goal in life, with wisdom and contemplation as the means of achieving it. They also see worldly pleasures at a lower status than happiness.
- b. They agree that sinful behavior patterns are similar to psychological disorders that require intervention and treatment, with moral philosophy as the study of treating them and promoting psychological well-being. In other words, moral philosophy is a practical field of enquiry.
- c. They also agree that moral principles are based on faith. This is a significant diversion from their predecessors, who separated morality from faith. For Arab Muslim philosophers, faith is the source of moral behavior, as they see moral ideals to be representations of Allah's attributes, which include the perfect balance between mercy and might. They also treat moral behavior as a manifestation of the belief in the afterlife. For example, Allah's attributes include: the Almighty, the Forgiving, the Merciful, the Kind, as stated in the Holy Qur'an: "Know that Allah is severe in penalty and that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (5:98); "Indeed, your Lord is full of forgiveness for the people despite their wrongdoing, and indeed, your Lord is severe in penalty" (13:6); "The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment, owner of abundance" (40:3); and "And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval" (57:20). Since Allah is the one who gives while expecting nothing in return, then giving is more honorable than asking and receiving. Accordingly, Islamic philosophers view giving while expecting nothing in return, not even expressions of gratitude, to be a moral ideal, as stated in the hadith: "The upper hand is better than the lower hand; the upper hand is that which gives and the lower hand is that which asks and receives."⁽¹⁾
- d. They all agree that individuals are required to abide by the legal rulings and moral teachings of the Shari'a. Al-Farabi writes: "Anyone interested in studying wisdom has to have a balanced mind. He has to have already studied the Holy Qur'an, the Arabic language, and the sciences of jurisprudence. Such a student cannot be someone who violates the Sunnah or the Shari'a, or someone who uses his knowledge of religion to make money. Otherwise, he would be a false scholar." Ibn Miskawayh reveres the Shari'a in many of his writings. For example, he writes: "Anyone who abides by the Shari'a establishes balance in his life, for Shari'a is just; thus, he acquires the happiness that comes about as a result of establishing justice. The source of Shari'a is Allah; therefore, it commands us to do good deeds."⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Hakim Ibn Hizam by Al-Bukhari (1427) and Muslim (1035), both on *Zakat*.

(2) *Tahdhib Al-Akhlaq* (The Book on Refinement of Conduct), Page 128.

B. Sufi Tendency In Ethics

During the early years of Islam, Muslims learned practices and taught Islam as a balanced comprehensive system. They did not emphasize one component of Islam at the expense of others. They balanced the intellectual, spiritual, and physical components, and they balanced the interests of the individual, the family, and society. In other words, they were equally interested in this world and the after-life. As their societies developed and became more complex, for many domestic and external reasons, new views that focused on particular aspects of the Islamic system emerged. Some focused on the intellectual side, such as the philosophers, while others focused almost entirely on ritualistic and legal aspects, such as those who specialized in jurisprudence. Others were completely immersed in pleasure and worldly gains, such as the ruling classes, while others were interested only in aesthetics, such as poets and writers. In the same fashion, Sufism emerged as a perspective that is dedicated exclusively to the spiritual aspects. They filled the gap that philosophers and jurisprudence scholars tended to ignore, and they called on people to save themselves from drowning in worldly pleasures.

Since its inception, Sufism has been a practical approach. It aims to achieve one goal, namely salvation, which is achieved through asceticism and closely following the Shari'a. This approach was not particularly new, as it was seen in the lives of many of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions, such as Omar, Ali, Abi Al-Darda', Abi Dhar, and Salman, among others. The evolution of Sufism started with a shift toward emphasis on the fear of Allah's anger and punishment in the afterlife, as in the lives of Al-Hassan Al-Basri (d. 110 A.H.), Al-Fudayl Ibn Eyad (d. 187 A.H.), Malik Ibn Dinar (d. 131 A.H.), and Ibarhim Ibn Adham (d. 161 A.H.), among others. However, it was the new element of love that set Sufism apart. This approach is clearly seen in the poetry of Rabi`a Al-Adawiyya (d. 185 A.H.) and in the writings of Abi Sulayman Al-Darani (d. 215 A.H.), Dhi Al-Nun Al-Misri (d. 245 A.H.), Abi Yazid Al-Bastami (d. 261 A.H.), and others, who declared that they do not obey Allah and worship Him out of fear of hellfire or out of desire for the bliss of heaven, but only out of love for Allah. This is clearly seen in Rabi`a Al-Adawiyya famous lines:

*They all pray to You fearing the Fire;
And if You do not put them in the Fire,
This is their reward.
Or they pray to You for Heaven,
Full of fruits and flowers.
And that is their prize.
But I do not pray to You like this,*

*For I am not afraid of the Fire,
And I do not ask You for Heaven.
But all I want is the Essence of Your Love.*

The Sufi writings of Abu Al-Qasim Al-Junayd (d. 297 A.H.) served as turning point in the history of Sufism. He declared that the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah are the only sources for religious practices and research. He writes: "Our path is tied to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah alone. Anyone who does not know the Holy Qur'an by heart and study the Sunnah or jurisprudence is not to be believed."⁽¹⁾ For centuries, Sufism followed Al-Junayd's approach, which discarded any innovation or deviation from the religious orthodoxy, but eventually philosophy found its way into Sufism. As a result, Sufism was no longer just about worshipping Allah and spiritual education; it integrated mysticism and intellectual investigation, even into discussions on the nature of existence and epistemology. We see these changes in the works of Al-Hallaj (d. 309 A.H) who believed in the duality of divine existence. He once said: "Nothing in my clothes but Allah." We see similar views in the works of Ibn Arabi's (d. 638 A.H.) who also claimed that nothing exists but Allah, thus eliminating the separation between the Creator and creation.

Imam Al-Ghazali

Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (d. 505 A.H.) is the most prominent Islamic scholar when it comes to ethics and moral philosophy. He is known as the *Hujjat al-Islam (the Proof of Islam)*, and as the leader of revival in the 15th Century A.H. He wrote some of the most influential books on Islam, such as his works on Shafi'i jurisprudence, including *Al-wasit*, *Al-Mujaz*, and *Al-Khulasa*. He also studied philosophy as seen in his *Maqasid Al-Falasifa (The Aims of Philosophers)*, and his later work *Tahafut al-Falasifa (The Incoherence of the Philosophers)*, in which he criticizes and refutes the major philosophical views in his time. In fact, he demonstrates the heretic nature of those philosophic approaches, which deny Allah as the Creator of the world, their claim that Allah is not aware of the details of life on earth, and their rejection of the concept of resurrection. Al-Ghazali also debunked the Batiniya school of philosophy, which is based on Shiite ideology.

Al-Ghazali's books reflect his development as a scholar who ended up choosing Sufism as his path. This can be seen clearly in his later books, all of which were dedicated to Sufism. These include his renowned book, *Ihyaa 'Ulum Al-Din (The Revival of Religious Sciences)*, which is divided into 40 chapters in four quarters: *The Acts*

(1) See *Ṭabaqāt Al-Shāfi'iyya Al-Kubrā* (Biographies of the Shafi'i is), Eds. by Al-Tanahi and Abd Al-Fattah Al-Hilw, 2nd Edition, 1413 A.H., 2/273.

of *Worship*, *Norms of Daily Life*, *The Ways to Perdition*, and *The Ways to Salvation*. The third quarter, *The Ways to Perdition*, is dedicated to poor manners, which he calls “deadly sins”, as described in the hadith “Three deadly sins: accepted stinginess, following one’s desires, and pride.”⁽¹⁾ The last quarter of the book focuses on good manners, which lead to salvation, such as repentance, patience, gratitude, hope, reliance on Allah, love, and honesty, among others.

Islamic Influences On Al-Ghazali’s Moral Philosophy

We can see through Al-Ghazali’s writings that he was heavily influenced by the following:

1. Islamic creed, acts of worship, morality, and social interactions: We see significant influence of hadith, Islamic jurisprudence, particularly the Shafi’i School, and theology, particularly the Ash’ari School. However, Al-Ghazali describes his own work as research that falls short of maintaining the standards of hadith sciences⁽²⁾. This is why we see many inaccurate hadiths in his works as demonstrated by Al-Hafidh Al-’Iraqi, the 8th Century scholar who verified and analyzed the hadiths used in Al-Ghazali’s *Revival*.
2. Sufism, particularly the works of Al-Harith Al-Muhasabi, and the major works on the subject, such as *Qūt Al-Qulūb (The Nourishment of Hearts)* by Ibi Talib Al-Makki and *Risālat Al-Qushayri (The Qushayri Treatise)*, among others.
3. Greek philosophy, which he studied through the works of Al-Farabi, Avicenna, Ibn Miskawayh, and others.

Al-Ghazali’s Moral Philosophy

We can summarize Al-Ghazali’s moral philosophy in the following points:

1. Intellect is an essential component of jurisprudence and any scholarly venture. In other words, he did not believe in “blind faith”.
2. Learning and the pursuit of knowledge are moral duties, hence *The Revival* starts with *The Book of Knowledge*. Al-Ghazali did not believe that knowledge is “a veil that prevents access to Allah”, as many Sufi contemporaries claimed. However, he argued that spiritual jihad comes first, as it cleanses the heart, thus lifting the veils of the senses and opening the way for knowledge.

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bazzar (7293), Al-Tabarani (5452), and Al-Albani (corrected; 3039).

(2) See *Qānūn Al-Ta’wīl (Methodology of Interpretation)* by Al-Ghazali, Ed. by Mahmoud Bejou, Page 30.

3. Al-Ghazali did not denounce pleasure as many Stoics did. He only called for moderation, so that one's energy is focused on the afterlife rather than this life.
4. For Al-Ghazali, happiness is the ultimate goal of morality, but true happiness can only be attained in the afterlife. This is because the afterlife is infinite, and it involves being close to Allah. True happiness for him is when Allah is pleased with His servant, which is the goodness that is achieved in and of itself.

This summary demonstrates that Al-Ghazali was a moderate compared to other Sufi scholars. However, his approach was subject to much criticism for deviating in some places from Islamic orthodoxy, as discussed by Abi Al-Faraj Al-Jawzi in his book *Talbīs Iblīs (The Devil's Deception)*. For example, while Al-Ghazali rejected many of the unorthodoxies of Sufism, he still considered it a spiritual approach to life rather than a way to help establish balance within an already existing religious approach. Moreover, he built many of his arguments on unattested and false hadiths.

Al-Ghazali's works, especially *The Revival*, have had a deep impact on Muslims, both scholars and otherwise. This impact can be attributed to the uniqueness of his approach, which includes well developed logical arguments, a powerful literary style, and honest spirituality.

Al-Jawzi's Criticism Of Al-Ghazali

Historian and scholar of jurisprudence Abu Al-Faraj Ibn Al-Jawzi (d. 597 A.H.) was a leading critic of Sufism and Al-Ghazali's in particular. His *Talbīs Iblīs (The Devil's Deception)*⁽¹⁾ is mostly a critique of Al-Ghazali's Sufism, and so is his biography of Al-Ghazali, *Al-Muntadhim*⁽²⁾. I have discussed Ibn Al-Jawzi's criticisms of Al-Ghazali in other places, such as *Al-Ghazālī bayna Mādīhīh wa-Nāqīdīh (Al-Ghazali between his Proponents and Critics)* and *Al-Warā' wal-Zuhd (Piety and Asceticism)*. In fact, Ibn Al-Jawzi is said to have written another book, namely *I'lām Al-'Ahyā' bi-Aghlāt Al-Ihyā'* (*Informing the Living of the Mistakes in the Revival*), in response of Al-Ghazali's *Revival*. However, I have not had the opportunity to see it, and I do not think it has been edited.

Al-Jawzi's criticism of Al-Ghazali revolves around the latter's adoption of

(1) See, for example, pages 149, 158, 190, 300, 311, and 321, Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Fikr Lil-Tibā' a wal-Nashr, 2001.

(2) See *Al-Muntadhim*, Ed. Abd Al-Qadir Atta (17/124-127), Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyya, 1992.

Sufism as the foundation of his works while ignoring jurisprudence.⁽¹⁾ He explains that Al-Ghazali followed the Sufis and admired them, as clearly stated in his works, even though their views often contradict jurisprudence.⁽²⁾ Ibn Al-Jawzi goes as far as saying: “How can a scholar of Islamic jurisprudence write such things? It is disheartening to me to see such a scholar of jurisprudence make such claims.”⁽³⁾ For example, Al-Jawzi summarizes Al-Ghazali’s description of some Sufi practices that amount to excessive asceticism and self-punishment, including standing on one’s head all night long and throwing away one’s money in the sea for fear of hypocrisy instead of giving it to charity. He writes: “I cannot understand how Abu Hamid would recommend such practices that clearly violate Islamic Shari’a. How can it be permissible for someone to stand on his head all night long? How can he recommend throwing away money, even though the Prophet (PBUH) explicitly forbids people from wasting their money?” He concludes his remarks by saying: “It seems that Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali has given up on jurisprudence in favor of Sufism.”⁽⁴⁾ Ibn Al-Jawzi’s other criticism is Al-Ghazali’s use of inaccurate hadiths, which he explains as the result of Al-Ghazali’s limited knowledge of hadith sciences. It is interesting to see how Ibn Al-Jawzi made the same errors in his own book of sermons, which also include some unverified sources, as noted by Ibn Al-Athir, the historian.

Ibn Taymiya’s Criticism Of Al-Ghazali

Taqiy Al-Din Abu Al-Abbas Ahmed Ibn Abd Al-Halim Ibn Taymiya (d. 728 A.H.) was another staunch critic of Al-Ghazali. Unlike Al-Ghazali, Ibn Taymiya was a superior scholar of hadiths, jurisprudence, and comparative religion. In fact, he was one of the leading scholars of his time and one of the very few scholars who achieved the status of unrestricted independent reasoning. Ibn Taymiya’s approach was to strictly follow the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions and those who lived in the 1st Century A.H., as we can see in his anthology of treatises and edicts, which were published in 35 volumes, including two on Sufism and the Sufi orders. He also adopted a form of practical asceticism, which was quite distinct from Sufism. He writes, for example: “If you imprison me, my cell would be my hermitage. If you banish me, I will be on a hijra [religious journey]. If you kill me, I will be a martyr.”

(1) See *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil’s Deception), Page 149: “Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali followed Sufism in his *Revival* and unknowingly used many inaccurate hadiths. He even departed from Shari’a laws in many of his discussions.”

(2) Ibid, (17/125).

(3) Ibid, 190: “I am surprised that Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, the scholar of jurisprudence, would stoop down to the level of Sufi traditions.” On page 195, he writes, “I cannot believe that a scholar of jurisprudence would say such things.” On page 311, he writes, “It is unacceptable for Abu Hamid to present these issues without refuting them. But how would he refute them if he is using them as teaching materials?”

(4) Ibid, 312.

Ibn Taymiya critiqued several of Al-Ghazali's books, including *Mi'yār Al-'Ilm* (*The Standard of Science*), *Fayṣal Al-Tafriqa* (*The Boundary of Theological Tolerance*), and *Jawāhir al-Qur'ān* (*The Jewels of the Qur'an*). He particularly focused on Al-Ghazali's Sufi claims which he deemed to contradict the orthodoxy. He even considered them to be heretic Qarmatian and philosophical arguments. He writes: "Al-Ghazali spent a lot of time studying the works of philosophers, and as a result he mixed many of their views with his own."⁽¹⁾ He warns his readers against believing Al-Ghazali, especially because of the respect Al-Ghazali received among Muslims. In his *Al-Fatāwā Al-Kubrā* (*The Great Compilation of Edicts*), Ibn Taymiya offers his critique of *The Revival*, saying that: "It is a very useful book, but it also includes many invalid philosophical arguments that have to do with the nature of monotheism, prophethood, and resurrection. It is dangerous to confuse these claims and arguments with Sufi knowledge, for that would be like disguising an enemy to look like a Muslim."

While Ibn Taymiya recognizes that *The Revival* included "many of the wise sayings of Sufi scholars who were well-versed in the acts of the heart", he asserts that "most of these sayings do not contradict the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah, and the book includes more of them than the inaccurate claims Al-Ghazali makes. It is Al-Ghazali's false claims that have led to the controversy over this book."⁽²⁾ Ibn Taymiya rejects Al-Ghazali's claims that are derived from the Peripatetic School, particularly the works of Avicenna. He also criticizes Al-Ghazali's use of false and unattested hadiths, which he also attributes to Al-Ghazali's lack of expertise in this area.

One of Al-Ghazali's arguments that Ibn Taymiya rejects is the claim that learning logic is a required religious duty. Ibn Taymiya considers this claim to be a grave mistake and a clear violation of the orthodoxy. Ibn Taymiya's argument is that while some elements of logic are valid, many others are false, and most of them are not necessary for everyone to know. He sees logic as a science that cannot help the uneducated, whereas intelligent people have no need for it because it is already part of their instinct.⁽³⁾ In his book *Naqd Al-Mantiq* (*A Critique of Logic*), we see Ibn Taymiya continuing to criticize Al-Ghazali, citing some works that are erroneously attributed to the latter, such as Al-Maḍnūn, Al-Mishkāh, and Al-Ma'ārij. The fact that these books share some of Al-Ghazali's views does not necessarily mean that he authored them, and many scholars have proved that they are not his books.⁽⁴⁾

(1) See *Bughyat Al-Murtād fī Al-Rad `alā Al-Mutafalsifa wal-Bāṭiniyya*, Ed. Musa Al-Duwaysh, KSA: Maktabat Al-Ulum wal-Hikam: 279, 1995.

(2) Ibid, 2/194.

(3) Ibid, 2/195.

(4) See the works of Abd Al-Rahman Badawi.

Summary And Conclusion

There is no doubt that Al-Ghazali was a great scholar, and that those who critiqued his work were also great scholars. Their criticisms of Al-Ghazali were essentially the result of different approaches and academic cultures as noted by Imam Taqiy Al-Din Al-Subki and his son Taj Al-Din Al-Subki. All the scholars who criticized Al-Ghazali also recognized the value of his works. For example, Al-Tartoushi writes: "I knew the man and his works. He was certainly a man of exceptional morality and knowledge."⁽¹⁾ The impact of Al-Ghazali's scholarship cannot be underestimated. Ibn Al-Jawzi, who was one of his main critics, wrote *Minhāj Al-Qāṣidīn (The Path of the Truth-Seekers)* which is an abridged edition of Al-Ghazali's *The Revival*.

Al-Ghazali was mainly criticized for adopting Sufism wholesale and for accepting its practices without analyzing them against the Shari'a. In *Al-Munqidh min Al-Ḍalāl (The Deliverance from Misguidance)*, Al-Ghazali describes himself as a scholar who studied philosophy, dialectics, and Ismaili Batinism, but found them to be far from the truth. In the end, he found the truth he was seeking in the practices of the Sufis who "are the ones on the true path to Allah and whose morals are of the noblest kind. Nothing in their practices and beliefs goes against the Shari'a. In fact, all their thoughts and actions are derived from the light of the Prophet (PBUH) ... How can anyone criticize a path that starts with purifying the heart from anything other than Allah? How can anyone criticize a path whose key is for the heart to be filled with the remembrance of Allah? How can anyone criticize a path whose ultimate goal is to completely lose oneself into Allah? It is a path that takes the individual through stages of spiritual development to places where one would experience things that cannot be described in words ... This is where one gets close to Allah. This is when one might experience things that some might imagine to be unity with Allah or reaching to Him, but these are all illusions. This is where one can only say:

What is done is done. I cannot remember.

Assume it was good, and speak no further."⁽²⁾

Al-Ghazali approached Sufism, not as a critic or as a scholar, but as a fan. In other words, he did not analyze Sufi heritage and literature the way he analyzed philosophy. He approached Sufism with love, which blinds the eyes, as Imam Al-Shafi'i writes:

The eye of love only sees in awe.

But the eye of anger sees every flaw.

(1) See *Tabaqāt Al-Shāfi'iyya (The Shafi'i's Biographies)*, 6/243.

(2) See *Al-Munqidh min Al-Ḍalāl (The Deliverance from Misguidance)*, 177-179.

Or, as Ibn Nabatah Al-Misri writes:

If the beloved makes a mistake,

Beauty would surely overtake.

This attitude toward Sufism is what motivated Al-Ghazali to accept many of its practices and beliefs that other scholars often criticized. Most of Ibn Al-Jawzi's criticisms of Al-Ghazali has to do with the latter's accepting Sufi ideas that contradict the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Al-Ghazali defended some such practices, even though his defense would not be acceptable to jurisprudence scholars. For example, Al-Ghazali tells the story of a Sufi who was known in his community for his piety, but this reputation caused him to fear his own pride. He went to the bathhouse and stole some expensive clothes. He was caught on his way out and was given a beating, and from that day on people called him "the bathhouse thief". The Sufi was pleased with the disgrace because it ruined his reputation. Al-Ghazali comments that "this is how Sufis trained themselves and struggled with their inner selves. Their goal was to rid themselves of thinking about people and about themselves. Sufis would treat themselves in ways that jurisprudence scholars would not accept. If they went too far, they would go back and try to fix what they had done."⁽¹⁾ It was this kind of defense and unfounded justification that drew criticism from Ibn Al-Jawzi and others.⁽²⁾

It is important to note here that Al-Ghazali did not take Sufism to heart without any questioning. This is clear in his writings, especially *The Revival*, where he rejects some Sufi claims about unity with Allah. He only accepted Sunni Sufism which recognizes only the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah as its resources. He tried very hard to support Sufi ideas using the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. He also tried to correct many Sufi claims about asceticism and reliance on Allah. Moreover, Al-Ghazali emphasized the value of religious scholarship and knowledge as a requirement for anyone seeking an enlightened path to the afterlife. This emphasis distinguishes Al-Ghazali from many Sufis who claim that knowledge stands as a barrier between people and Allah. This is why the first chapter in *The Revival* is *The Book of Knowledge*. He even argued that the first obstacle a person needs to overcome on the way to Allah is knowledge. In fact, he repeatedly stressed that happiness can be achieved only with work and knowledge. In his treatise "Oh, Young Man," he writes: "Knowl-

(1) See *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deception), 454-355. Also, see *The Revival* (3/288).

(2) Ibn Al-Jawzi comments on this story: "How can a sin be a means to cleanse the heart? Is there nothing in the Shari'a that can help purify the heart? This is what many rulers unjustifiably do. They would justify cutting off family ties and even killing people under the guise of politics. This amounts to claiming that the Shari'a is not sufficient to achieve legitimate goals. How can a Muslim justify stealing?" See *Talbīs Iblīs* (The Devil's Deception), 355.

edge without work is madness, and work without knowledge is impossible.”⁽¹⁾

One of the defining features of Al-Ghazali's approach to Sufism is his rejection of Batini interpretations of religious texts, if these interpretations contradict the literal meaning of the texts. For Al-Ghazali, the Batini approach renders religious texts meaningless, for we would not be able to trust what a text says, and there would be no rules that regulate “underlying” interpretations. For example, some Batini scholars have claimed that the sentence “he has transgressed” in “Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed” (Holy Qur'an, 20:24) refers to Pharaoh's heart rather than his evil actions. They have also claimed that Moses' staff in “And [Moses was told]: ‘Throw down your staff.’” (Holy Qur'an, 28:31) refers to anything a person leans on, or relies upon, other than Allah, which should, therefore, be discarded. Batini scholars applied the same false interpretation methods to the hadith. For example, they interpreted “Suhur” in the hadith “Eat Suhur [the pre-dawn meal during Ramadan]. Surely, there is a blessing in Suhur”⁽²⁾ to mean asking for forgiveness rather than eating. It is obvious how this approach to interpreting religious texts was used by the Batinis to undermine the entire Shari'a.⁽³⁾ In his book of *Denouncing Vanity*, which is part of *The Revival*, Al-Ghazali offers some scathing criticism of those he calls “vain Sufis” who claim to be Allah's people who receive divine knowledge. He writes: “The third category of vain people includes Sufis from different orders”, and he lists these orders and debunks their claims.⁽⁴⁾

In summary, Al-Ghazali introduced a major paradigm shift in Sufism, as he transformed it from a matter of personal religious experience to a practical discipline that aims to use morality to treat the ailments of the heart and weaknesses of the inner self. In fact, morality is the core of *The Revival*. In his introduction, Al-Ghazali describes the third quarter of the book, *The Ways to Perdition*, as a discussion of the poor morals that the Holy Qur'an has been sent down to remove from people's hearts. He also describes the fourth quarter, *The Ways to Salvation*, as a discussion of the good morals that bring people closer to Allah.⁽⁵⁾

Another aspect of Sufism that Al-Ghazali criticized is the lack of a scientific method, such as the unclear definitions of “actions of the hearts”, which have to do with subjective personal experiences. For example, in his discussion of repentance,

(1) See *Ayyuhā Al-Walad* “O, Young Man” by Al-Ghazali, Ed. by Jamil Ibn Ibrahim Habib, 25.

(2) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (1923) and Muslim (1095), both on fasting.

(3) See *The Revival* (1/27), “The Book of Knowledge” and Page 29 of “The Book of Reciting the Qur'an.” It is unfortunate that while Al-Ghazali rejected these types of interpretations, he adopted some of them himself, such as his interpretation of “the planet,” “the moon,” and “the sun” in Abraham's story as veils of light rather than celestial beings. See “The Book of Denouncing Vanity,” *The Revival*, (3/406-407). Ibn Al-Jawzi and Ibn Taymiya rightfully criticized Al-Ghazali for such unwarranted interpretations.

(4) See *The Revival*, (3/404-406).

(5) See *The Revival*, (1/3).

he writes: “Sufi discussions on this topic always fall short of scientific standards, as each of them would tell his own anecdotes without any interest in others’ experiences. As a result, their approaches are quite diverse.”⁽¹⁾ He even tried to offer clear definitions to Sufi terms and to restrict Sufism in ways that align with Shari’a.

To appreciate Al-Ghazali’s influence on Sufism, one has to compare how Sufism was practiced before him and afterwards. This influence was recognized by Muslim scholars and orientalist alike. For example, Reynold Nicholson writes in his book *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* that: “A 5th Century A.H. Persian Sufi once wrote to decry how his contemporaries call their personal desires a ‘Shari’a’, their illusions ‘divine knowledge’, and their caprice ‘divine love’. They even called their heretic ways and disregard for the Sunnah a ‘Sufi path’.”⁽²⁾

In 1405 CE, Al-Qushayri wrote his famous *Risāla (Treatise on Sufism)*, where he reminds the Sufis of the time of their predecessors’ piety and knowledge, and how Sufism changed over time. He warns his readers that Sufism has become a cover for heresy and greed. Al-Qushayri’s call did not go in vain thanks to Al-Ghazali, who reunited Sufism with the Holy Qur’an and redirected Sufism toward the true path. In other words, Al-Ghazali resolved the conflict within himself first before writing about it. Al-Ghazali went through a long journey that took him from doubt to Sufism, but there are two points that he always held on to: one is upholding the Shari’a, and the other is his understanding of monotheism. He rejected the unity of the universe, as he writes: “Allah Almighty is an indivisible essence that does not undergo change. The degree to which humans can emulate divine characteristics corresponds to their ability to know Allah. However, a servant will always be a servant, and Allah will always be Allah, and neither will ever be the same as the other. What we know about Allah is only what He lets us know through His revelations to prophets and holy people,⁽³⁾ whom He created.” This is how Al-Ghazali understood divinity; he accepts that people’s hearts can get closer to Allah, but he vehemently rejects the idea of unification.”⁽⁴⁾

Al-Ghazali On Divine Disclosure

Perhaps the most significant criticism of Al-Ghazali’s work on Sufism has to do with the issue divine disclosure, which is a type of religious experience Sufis claim to achieve after spiritual purification. Al-Ghazali states that divine disclosure is not the kind of knowledge to be written about. Whenever he had a slip of the pen

(1) See *The Revival*, (4/24).

(2) See *Kashf Al-Mahjūb* (Revealing the Secrets) by Al-Hujwiri.

(3) Holy people do not receive revelations, as they can only be inspired. Nevertheless, this inspiration is not immune from error.

(4) See Abu Al-‘Ila Afifi’s translation of “Studies in Islamic Mysticism,” 83-84.

and revealed a hint of these disclosures, he would immediately restrain himself: "Nobody can even attempt to express such experiences without making grave mistakes in his expression."⁽¹⁾ Al-Ghazali's discussions of divine disclosure drew a lot of criticism, which seems to have started during his lifetime. In his introduction of *Minhāj Al-`ābidīn* (*Methodology for Worshipping*), which was the last of his books and the one he allowed only his closest friends to read, Al-Ghazali asserts that he wrote another book similar to *The Revival*, but it focused on Sufism. He included a lot of his knowledge in that book, but many people who failed to understand him correctly criticized him sharply. He concluded this section with a few lines of poetry often attributed to Imam Ali Zayn Al-Abidin Ibn Al-Hussein:

*I hide the most valuable of my knowledge,
Lest the ignorant would see it and fall into doubt.
That is what Abu Hassan told Hussein and Al-Hassan before.
Oh, Allah! Such knowledge, but if I open my mouth,
They would say I worship idols and even kill me.
They would see the worst of their actions to be good.*⁽²⁾

Al-Taj Al-Subki quotes Imam Al-Maziri's objections to Al-Ghazali's claim that some knowledge is not meant to be shared. He writes: "I am not sure whether this is true or not. If such knowledge is false, he is right not to share it, but if it was the truth, which is what he meant, why not share it? Is it because it is difficult for most people to understand? Even if this is the case, Al-Maziri is right to call on Al-Ghazali to explain it in a way that people can understand." Al-Subki later addresses Al-Maziri's concerns: "There is indeed a certain type of knowledge that scholars should not go public with because some people are not capable of appreciating such knowledge. There are also other types of knowledge that cannot be described in language and can only be experienced directly. There are even things that Allah has not given permission for them to be revealed." Al-Subki responds to Al-Maziri's criticism citing the hadith: "Talk to people about what they know. Or would you like Allah and His Prophet to be disbelieved?"⁽³⁾ Al-Subki continues his defense of Al-Ghazali: "We quite often see scholars urging others not to discuss certain issues in public so as not to embarrass those who do not understand them. Even Imam Al-Shafi'i argues that one cannot trust a laborer who works for other people for fear of evil doing. Al-Rabi' quotes Imam Al-Shafi'i as saying: "Judges rule according to their knowledge. If you reveal certain types of knowledge to

(1) *Al-Munqidh min Al-Ḍalāl* (The Deliverance from Misguidance), by Al-Ghazali, 177.

(2) *Minhāj Al-`ābidīn* (Methodology for Worshipping) by Al-Ghazali, Ed. by Mustafa Al-Halabi, 1337 A.H., Page 3.

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on knowledge (127).

corrupt judges, they may abuse this knowledge.” In short, Al-Subki concludes that sometimes it is better not to make certain types of knowledge public for fear of the consequences.”⁽¹⁾

Al-Subki’s defense is neither convincing nor satisfying. He only lists examples of odd cases where some knowledge is better not shared with uneducated people for fear that they might misunderstand or misuse them. At most, his defense amounts to the claim that different groups of people are better addressed at their level of knowledge. This claim does not justify hiding knowledge from other scholars. What I sense from Al-Ghazali’s statement and the poetry he quotes is that some of this “secret knowledge” contradicts the Shari’a, and he feared that if he shared them, he would be accused of apostasy.

What matters most is that Allah has revealed His Book for all people to learn from it, think about it, and act accordingly. Allah says:

- “Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may be to the worlds a warner” (Holy Qur’an, 25:1).
- “This [Holy Qur’an] is a notification for the people that they may be warned thereby and that they may know that He is but one Allah and that those of understanding will be reminded” (Holy Qur’an, 14:52).
- “Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Holy Qur’an that you might understand” (Holy Qur’an, 12: 2).
- “And We have certainly made the Holy Qur’an easy for remembrance, so is there any who will remember?” (Holy Qur’an, 54:17).

While people surely differ in how much they understand from the Holy Qur’an and their ability to interpret it, they can all still recite it and learn from it. Those who have been given the gift of interpreting it, such as Ali and Ibn Al-Abbas, are required to teach people at their level.

An Overview Of Sufism

Sufism has always been a very controversial subject. We have seen many staunch proponents who only see the positive aspects of Sufi practices and defend the actions of Sufis, even if they are obviously wrong. Some have even gone as far as claiming that Sufis are infallible. Others have taken the reverse position and simply denounced everything related to Sufism. Some have gone as far as claiming Sufism to be a religious sect derived from Christianity, Buddhism, or Brahman-

(1) See *Tabaqāt Al-Shafi’iyya* (6/251-252).

ism. To be fair, Sufism is deeply rooted in Islam, as its foundations go back to the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions who chose to lead lives of asceticism, such as Omar, Ali, Abu Al-Darda', Salman, and Abi Dhar, among others.

The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah consistently warn people against being trapped in the pleasures of this world, and urge people to stay focused on serving Allah and preparing for the afterlife. This is why we see so many Holy Qur'anic verses and hadiths that warn people against the torments of hellfire and encourage them to think of the bliss in Paradise. We also see many hadiths and Qur'anic verses that talk about loving Allah: "A people He will love and who will love Him" (Holy Qur'an, 5:54) and "Those who believe are stronger in love for Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 2: 165). We also see many verses and hadiths that talk about the virtues of asceticism, reliance on Allah, patience, fear of Allah, monitoring oneself, repentance, and several other fundamental tenets of Sufism.

It was the Sufis themselves who introduced the concepts of the truth and its various types, but they did not provide definitions or explanations that would help others understand them. Nevertheless, they are the ones who know best about the ailments of the heart, the pathways of Satan, and the weaknesses of the inner self. They are also the ones who know best about how to deal with these moral issues, as they developed educational modules and regimens that help cure them. They have also been quite successful in reaching out to those who need help, and numerous people have chosen repentance and found their path to Allah through Sufism.

Sufism started out as a path of religious ethics and pure worship, a path that required willpower, as discussed by Ibn Al-Qayyim and others.⁽¹⁾ However, Sufism has shifted from being a study of Islamic ethics to a theory of epistemology and the essence of existence that aims to achieve a status of enlightenment and divine discourse through meditation and self-purification. Later on, there have been numerous deviations from Islamic orthodoxy, which we see in Sufi philosophies that claim universal unity and oneness with Allah. Some such theories claim that nothing exists but Allah, and nothing we see and experience is true or real. These theories were heavily influenced by some Christian views that claim God materialized in the form of Jesus. In fact, these views go back to pagan traditions that were prevalent in Greek, Roman, Persian, Indian, and Chinese cultures.

These views found their way into Sufism through the writings and poetry of certain scholars who were sentenced to death for apostasy, such as Al-Sahruwardi Al-Maqtul (d. 563 A.H.) and Al-Hallaj (d. 309 A.H.). Perhaps the most famous of those scholars is Ibn Arabi (d. 638 A.H.), but we are not sure whether some of these works are truly his. Therefore, nobody can deny that Sufism was heavily

(1) See *Madārij Al-Sālikin* (2/352).

influenced by foreign cultures in ways that deviated from moderate orthodox Islam.

Examples Of Sufi Deviations

Some fundamental tenets of Sufism deviate from Islam. These are:

1. Sufi scholars used personal experience as the standard to determine what was true and what was false. Some went as far as to make statements that started with phrases such as “My heart has told me that ...”, or in the same manner as the statement “so-and-so narrated” used by Sunnah scholars in relating the hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH).
2. Sufi scholars distinguished between the Shari’a and the truth, and issued moral judgments accordingly. For example, they would determine that someone was a sinner according to Shari’a, but at the same time they would also sympathize with that person according to their standards of truth.
3. Sufi scholars violated the standards of the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah by despising this world. Allah says: “Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire” (Holy Qur’an, 2: 201). This verse specifies the balanced path of the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions and followers who said: “Work for this world as if you live forever, and work for the afterlife as if you die tomorrow.”⁽¹⁾
4. Many Sufi scholars took determinism to heart, to the point of complete fatalism, which has negatively influenced Muslim attitudes toward life. They spread the false belief that people have no control over their lives, and that there is no point fighting against corruption and injustice because Allah has willed them to exist.
5. Sufi students had no say in their own education, and they had no right to ask questions, to object, or to discuss anything with their sheikhs. They might say: “A student to his sheikh is like a corpse to a corpse washer” and “He who asks his sheikh ‘Why?’ never succeeds.”

These Sufi ideals were so widespread that many have erroneously accepted them as part of Islam. By the time modern renaissance started in Muslim countries, many intellectuals had already rejected Islam, assuming that those Sufi ideals were part of its essence. However, to be fair, the early Sufis warned against

(1) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Al-Harith in his *Musnad* (1093).

such deviations, and they tried to protect Sufism by requiring it to align with the Shari'a. For example, Ibn Al-Qayyim quotes several early Sufi statements to that effect, such as Al-Junayd's warning: "All the paths that people take have dead ends, except for the Prophet's path."⁽¹⁾ Abu Yazid once said: "Do not follow a man who performs miracles, even if he can levitate, unless you see him follow the Shari'a."⁽²⁾

Finally, there is a more sinister problem with Sufism which is not discussed often, namely the development of Sufi philosophies such as the works of Ibn Sab'een and Ibn Arabi. These philosophies were developed by people who explicitly expressed opinions that look like apostasy and who clearly violated the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah.

C. The Qur'an-Sunnah Salafi Approach To Ethics

In contrast to Sufism, the Qur'an-Sunnah Salafi approach is more comprehensive and more balanced, as it is closely attached to the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. This is the approach I believe to be the true moderate Islamic view. It is exclusively derived from the texts of the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the biographies of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions. The underlying principles of this approach are not influenced by foreign philosophies, excessive monasticism, or Sufi tendencies, but it is open to studying these schools of thought and learning from their experiences.

Most of the figures that represent this approach are Sunnah and Hadith scholars who follow the Hanbali school of jurisprudence. The defining feature of the Salafi approach is that it views the Holy Qur'an as the absolute truth, the Prophet's Sunnah as the best role model for the pursuit of the truth, and that the best time periods are the century of the revelation and the two that followed. In other words, the fundamental tenet of Salafism is that the path to Allah is the path of the Prophet (PBUH), his companions, and those who followed in their footsteps: "And the first forerunners [in the faith] among the Muhajireen and the Ansar and those who followed them with good conduct - Allah is pleased with them and they are pleased with Him, and He has prepared for them gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they will abide forever. That is the great attainment" (Holy Qur'an, 5:100). Salafi scholars represent the accurate model of Islamic ethics and behavior, which includes moderate Sufism. They are the ones described in the Holy Qur'an in the following: "Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good" (Holy Qur'an, 16:128).

The founders of the Salafi approach include such scholars as Imam Malik Ibn Anas and his students, such as Al-Qarafi and Al-Shatibi, Imam Shafi'i and his stu-

(1) Narrated by Abu Nuaym in *Hilyat Al-Awliyā'* (10/257).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on faith (1719).

dents, such as Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salam, Al-Nawawi, and Al-Rafi`i, among others, and the Hanbali leading scholars, such as Ibn Qudama, Ibn Aquil, Ibn Al-Jawzi, whose critique of Al-Ghazali was discussed in the preceding section, Al-Dhahabi, Ibn Al-Qayyim, Ibn Kathir, and Ibn Rajab, among others. The founders include many Hadith scholars, including Ibn Al-Wazir, Al-San`ani, and Al-Shawkani. Salafism is not limited to Hanbali scholars, as some of its founders include scholars from the Hanafi School, such as Shah Wali Allah Al-Dahlawi and the Nadwi's.

The Foundations Of The Salafi Approach To Ethics

1. The Salafi approach, which served as the foundation of the works of Ibn Taymiya, Al-Ezz Ibn Abd Al-Salam, and Al-Nawawi, rejected the Islamic approaches to ethics that were based on Greek philosophies, such as the works of Al-Kindi, Al-Farabi, and Avicenna, in addition to any scholarly works that were not founded on the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Salafism also rejected theoretical works on ethics that were indirectly influenced by Greek philosophies, such as *The Cultivation of Morals* by Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421 A.H.). Some moderate Salafis, however, recognized these works as we see in the analysis by Ibn Taymiya and Ibn Al-Qayyim.
2. The Salafi approach did not reject Sufism wholesale. Rather, all Sufi concepts that do not contradict the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah were incorporated into Salafi scholarship, such as the Sufi concept of maqams, or spiritual stations. In other words, Salafism abides by the verse: "So remain on a right course as you have been commanded, [you] and those who have turned back with you [to Allah], and do not transgress. Indeed, He is seeing of what you do. And do not incline toward those who do wrong, lest you be touched by the Fire, and you would not have other than Allah any protectors; then you would not be helped" (Holy Qur'an, 11:112-113).
3. Salafi scholars agreed with Al-Ghazali to reject Sufi philosophies that violated the basic concept of monotheism, such as the Al-Hallaj's claims regarding the "Infusion of the Essences". when he stated that there is nothing in his clothes but Allah. The Salafi approach strictly maintains the existential dualism that separates the Creator from creation. Therefore, it does not accept Ibn Arabi's notion of mystic union, which views anything other than Allah to be a non-existent illusion.
4. Salafi views on ethics recognize only two types of resource for intellectual pursuit. The first includes the sources of Islamic jurisprudence. These are the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, scholarly consensus, and qiyas (deductive analogy). The second type of resource is for cases where no textual evidence is available and scholarly consensus is not possible. In such cases, Salafism recognizes social traditions, social well-being, and logical arguments.

5. All theoretical and practical aspects of Salafism are based on a moderate, yet comprehensive, interpretation of Islam that balances materialism and spirituality, the individual's interests and society's well-being, realism and idealism; and divinity and humanity. This balance is the cornerstone of Salafi ethics: "And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you" (Holy Qur'an, 2:143).

In the following sections, I will discuss these foundations in more detail while summarizing the contributions of Ibn Taymiya and his student Ibn Al-Qayyim, who were the main founders of Salafism.

Sheikh Al-Islam Ibn Taymiya ⁽¹⁾

For Ibn Taymiya, ethics are based on the Islamic sources of moral obligation: religious revelations and sound instinct. These sources function within the view that Islam is the only way to achieve moral objectives and happiness. He writes: "Allah created people with a true sound instinct and sent His messengers with scriptures. People are guided by this instinct which is complemented by the revelations."⁽²⁾ Ibn Taymiya viewed the prophets' path to be the only way to achieve happiness, know Allah, and worship Him. He compares the prophets' path with that of philosophers emphasizing that "Philosophers have no idea about the prophets' path, and they are nowhere near it. Even the non-believers among Jews and Christians are better informed about divinity. The prophets' path does not concern divine knowledge which Allah has revealed to His prophets exclusively. This type of direct knowledge is specific for prophets, and nobody else has access to it. Rather, this path concerns human intellect and the knowledge prophets used to guide people to learn about Allah and worship Him. Moreover, this path involves practical aspects of life and actions that lead to achieving happiness in the afterlife. All prophets used intellect to preach and to reach out to people, and it is this particular type of knowledge that is beyond the limits of philosophy."⁽³⁾

Ibn Taymiya responds to the philosophers' claim that knowledge leads to the perfection of the inner self by arguing that human perfection is worshipping, knowing, and loving Allah. He writes: "If it is possible for human perfection to be achieved through knowledge, the two components of the inner self (abstract intellectual force and practical willpower) would necessarily be perfect. However,

(1) See *Al-Nadhariya Al-Khuluqiya 'inda Ibn Taymiya* (Ibn Taymiya's Theory of Moral Ethics), Mohammed Abdullah Afifi, King Faisal Center of Islamic Studies, 1988.

(2) *Bayān Talbis Al-Jahmiya* (The Refutation of the Jahmis) by Ibn Taymiya (2/471), eds. King Fahd Glorious Qur'an Printing Complex, 1426 A.H.

(3) *Al-Rad 'ala Al-Mantiqiyin* (Response to Logicians), Ibn Taymiya. Lebanon: Dar Al-Ma'rifa, page 394.

this perfection is achievable only through worshipping Allah, which incorporates knowing Him and loving Him. Allah has sent His prophets and scriptures to call on people to worship Him alone. Some philosophers claim that acts of worship are intended to achieve morality in preparation for knowledge, which they see as the perfection of humanity. Others claim that acts of worship have a practical aspect, which is to serve the community. Both groups view acts of worship as a means to achieve an end, namely knowledge. The issue here is that acts of worship would become unnecessary for those who have already achieved the end. This is the same error of the Ismailis and other groups of non-believers who called themselves Sufis, Shiites, or others.”⁽¹⁾ Based on the same premise, Ibn Taymiya rejected the Jahmi claims that faith can be defined exclusively in terms of knowing Allah. He writes: “The Jahmis claim that faith is synonymous with knowing Allah, but this claim defines human perfection as knowledge of the Absolute.”⁽²⁾

Ibn Taymiya also comments on practical philosophical knowledge, which includes ethics. For him, practical knowledge does not achieve human perfection, and it does not compare to the knowledge of the prophets. He argues: “Philosophers unjustifiably claim that practical knowledge is similar to Shari’a and the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH). Philosophic knowledge assumes two forces of the inner self: pleasure, which ensures positive experiences, and anger, which avoids unpleasant ones. Thus, practical knowledge requires moderation of anger, which is manifested in courage, and moderation of pleasure, which is manifested in virtue, to achieve a balanced state of personal justice. Since philosophers require practical knowledge to achieve human perfection, knowledge, virtue, courage, and justice are treated as perfections in their own right.”

Ibn Taymiya was not the only one to address these issues. Other scholars who claimed to offer an Islamic perspective on ethics also addressed them using evidence from the Holy Qur’an, the Sunnah, and the biographies of the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions. These scholars include Abu Hamid, author of *Mawāzīn Al-A`māl (The Scales of Acts)*, Ikhwan Al-Safa, Mohammed Ibn Yusuf Al-`Amiri, and others. However, these scholars built their arguments on the false premise that theoretical knowledge, as defined in Greek philosophies, is the same thing as the knowledge praised in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah. The latter is in fact “wisdom”, which refers to theoretical knowledge as practice. For example, Ibn Qutayba defines wisdom as “knowledge and its applications”, whereas Malik defines it as “knowledge of religion and its applications”. Accordingly, every culture has its own wisdom depending on its sciences and religious traditions. For example, Hindus are polytheists, yet they have their own wisdom. Pre-Islamic

(1) Ibid, 144-145.

(2) Ibid

Arabs also had their share of wisdom, but they were idol worshippers. The same applies to the Greeks; their definition of wisdom does not apply to other cultures. There is no doubt that the wise people of every culture are the ones who achieve the highest levels of theoretical and practical knowledge, but this does not necessarily mean that they are the ones whom Allah and the Prophet (PBUH) praise in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. This praise is only for those who are both Muslim and faithful, those who believe in Allah, His angels, His scriptures, His messengers, and resurrection: "Indeed, those who believed and those who were Jews or Christians or Sabeans [before Prophet Mohammed] - those [among them] who believed in Allah and the Last Day and did righteousness - will have their reward with their Lord, and no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve" (Holy Qur'an, 2:62); "And they say: 'None will enter Paradise except one who is a Jew or a Christian'. That is [merely] their wishful thinking, Say, 'Produce your proof, if you should be truthful'. Yes [on the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve" (Holy Qur'an, 2:111-112); and "And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and follows the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend" (Holy Qur'an, 4:125).

It is important to note here that the Holy Qur'an uses the term "Muslim" to describe prophets and their followers since Noah to the apostles of Jesus. Allah says: "And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers" (Holy Qur'an, 3:85), which applies across time and space. Allah also says: "Indeed, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam" (Holy Qur'an, 3:19), and "And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], 'Worship Allah and avoid Taghut'. And among them were those whom Allah guided, and among them were those upon whom error was [deservedly] decreed. So proceed through the earth and observe how was the end of the deniers" (Holy Qur'an, 16:36). In the chapters of the Women and the Cow, Allah says: "Whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good" (Holy Qur'an, 2:112; 4:125) to define Muslims as those who dedicate all their actions to the service of Allah alone."⁽¹⁾

Ibn Taymiya establishes a balance between philosophical and Islamic views on human perfection. He writes: "The philosophers' argument regarding acts of worship, morality, and practical wisdom is straightforward. They recognize desire and anger as practical powers that co-exist with the power of knowledge. For them, this is the structure of the inner self. They see virtue as the perfection of desire, courage as the perfection of anger, and wisdom as the perfection of knowledge.

(1) Ibid, 446-448.

The balance between these powers is justice. However, they do not recognize the other powers of the inner self, such as the power of loving Allah and the power of faith. In fact, they were not even aware of such powers. Besides, their knowledge about Allah was very limited, and it was mixed with a lot of inaccurate information. Human perfection is loving Allah and worshipping Him alone, without which the inner self is corrupted.”

Thus, Islam is the religion of all prophets:

- *“And We certainly sent into every nation a messenger, [saying], ‘Worship Allah and avoid Taghut’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 16:36).*
- *“We sent not before you any messenger except that We revealed to him that, ‘There is no deity except Me, so worship Me’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 21:25).*
- *“Whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him” (Holy Qur’an, 3:85).*
- *“Ask those We sent before you of Our messengers; have We made besides the Most Merciful deities to be worshipped?” (Holy Qur’an, 43:45).*
- *“[Allah said], ‘Oh messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am Knowing’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 23:51).*
- *“Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me. And [yet] they divided their affair among themselves, [but] all to Us will return” (Holy Qur’an, 21:92-93).*
- *“He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [Oh Mohammed], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein” (Holy Qur’an, 42:13).*
- *“Direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the creation of Allah. That is the correct religion, but most of the people do not know” (Holy Qur’an, 30:30).*
- *“I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (Holy Qur’an, 51:56).*

Human perfection, happiness, and salvation can be achieved only through worshipping Allah alone, which is the truth behind the Shahada: "There is no god but Allah". This truth is the core of all the messages that the prophets came with, and it is the cornerstone of all scriptures. Without this truth, there is no hope for purification: "And woe to those who associate others with Allah - Those who do not give *Zakat*, and in the Hereafter they are disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 41:6-7). Note that *Zakat* here is a means of self-purification. Allah says: "Indeed, Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills" (Holy Qur'an, 4:48; 4:116). This verse is repeated to emphasize that without faith, happiness and salvation are not possible. The Shahada is the declaration of monotheistic faith, which is also the opening statement of the Ten Commandments: "And God spoke all these words: 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other Gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God'" (Exodus, 20). Jesus (PBUH) declared the Shahada to be the greatest commandment in the scriptures: 'Worship God alone and love Him more than anything else'. In contrast with the one sin that Allah does not forgive, there is love: "And [yet], among the people are those who take other than Allah as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love Allah. But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 2:165).⁽¹⁾

Ibn Al-Qayyim

Imam Shams Al-Din Abu Abdullah Mohammed Ibn Abi Bakr Ibn Al-Qayyim (d. 751 A.H.) was a student of Ibn Taymiya. He was a scholar of the highest caliber whose approach combined spirituality and jurisprudence in addition to scientific and philosophical knowledge. He was the author of some of the canons of Islamic Studies, such as *Zād Al-Mi'ād* (*Provisions for the Hereafter*), *Miftāḥ Dār Al-Sa'āda* (*Key to the Abode of Happiness*), and *I'lām Al-Muwaqqi'īn 'an Rabb Al-'Ālāmīn* (*Informing Those who Write on Behalf of the Lord of the Worlds*). His commentary on Sunan Abu Dawud, which was published along with Al-Mundhiri's abridged edition and Al-Khatābi's *Ma'ālim Al-Sunan* (*Features of Sunnah*), is a critical resource on the prophetic tradition.

Ibn Al-Qayyim dedicated one of his main books, namely *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (*The Stations of Remembrance*) to the issues of ethics and morality. This highly influential book is a commentary on the works of Abu Ismail Abdullah Ibn Mohammed Al-Harawi (d. 481 A.H.), a leading Sufi scholar who followed the Hanbali school

(1) Ibid, 6/32.

of jurisprudence, whose book *Dham Al-Ta'wil fī Al-Asmā' wal-ṣifāt* (*Denouncing Interpretations of Allah's Names and Attributes*) inspired Madārij Al-Sālikīn. Ibn Al-Qayyim followed Al-Harawī's approach of balancing Sufi teachings on one hand and the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah on the other. This approach is the hallmark of Ibn Al-Qayyim's approach, which can be easily seen in his other works, such as *Ighāthat Al-lahfān* (*Aid for the Yearning*), *Uddat Aṣ-Ṣābirīn* (*Patience and Gratitude*), *Ad-Dā'wad-Dawā'* (*The Ailments and the Medicine*), and *Rawḍat Al-Muḥibbīn* (*The Lovers' Garden*), and others. This is the balance mentioned in the Holy Qur'an in the verses: "And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance - That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance" (55:7-9).

Ibn Al-Qayyim was a prolific scholar who developed an exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, detailed explanations of the Sunnah, and remarkable works on Islamic jurisprudence. His writing style was impeccable, as he offered intricate, yet accessible, analyses of diverse topics. For example, he took Al-Harawī's rather enigmatic short treatise *Dham Al-Ta'wil fī Al-Asmā' wa Al-ṣifāt* (*Denouncing Interpretations of Allah's Names and Attributes*) and expounded it into *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (*The Stations of Remembrance*), a three-volume critical encyclopedia of Islamic creed, acts of worship, ethics, and social interactions. I wish Ibn Al-Qayyim had not delved into Sufi issues, which are sometimes open to conflicting interpretations, but he accepted the challenges associated with the pursuit of the truth. This is why we often see him quite critical of Al-Harawī whom highly admired as he noted: "Sheikh Al-Islam Al-Harawī is dear to me, but the truth comes first."⁽¹⁾

Madārij Al-Sālikīn (*The Stations of Remembrance*) demonstrates how Ibn Al-Qayyim accepted many Sufi concepts as long as they did not conflict with the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah in an attempt to make sound Sufism a path to the truth. He did his best to be unbiased toward Sufism, but he maintained his critical approach. For example, Sufis often define Sufism as morality, but Ibn Al-Qayyim does not take this definition at face value. He explains that "Religion is all about morality"⁽²⁾ thus denying any special status for Sufism. Ibn Al-Qayyim did not hesitate to point out errors in Al-Harawī's treatise. He writes, for example: "Al-Harawī is obviously wrong when he claims that thinking about the essence of monotheism is a form of disbelief."⁽³⁾ This claim is the main thesis of Al-Harawī's treatise, as he argues that thinking about the essence of monotheism is a deviation from true monotheism, which can be established in the worshipper's heart only when he is beyond thinking. In other words, Al-Harawī viewed intellectual pursuit to presuppose the existence of a thinking agent, whereas true monothe-

(1) *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (*The Stations of Remembrance*), 2/37.

(2) *Ibid*, 2/294.

(3) *Manāzil Al-Sā'irīn* (*The Stations of the Travelers*) by Al-Harawī, Beirut, Lebanon, Page 18.

ism presupposes only one agent, namely Allah. Al-Harawi summarizes his treatise in the following lines:

*No-one ever truly worshipped Allah alone,
Only an unbeliever would think he can,
For worshipping requires a worshipper
Who can describe Allah as the One.*

In these lines, Al-Harawi states that nobody has ever worshipped Allah through true monotheism, which necessitates the lack of images, events, and everything that is derived. Worshipping is an act that requires an agent, which cannot exist without an image (a body). In other words, worshipping requires an existence other than Allah's existence, which is in itself a contradiction to true monotheism, which entails only Allah's absolute existence. Moreover, the agent's existence is limited to a time and space, while Allah transcends time and space. Consequently, only Allah can perceive of His absolute oneness. Thus, describing Allah in any way, including describing Him as being the One, is itself a violation of His oneness and true monotheism.

Others have interpreted these lines differently. For example, Sufi scholars who believed in the unity of essence between Allah and humans take them to mean that claiming Allah's oneness is inherently wrong, for it requires a description of Allah (being one) while Allah is beyond description. They see Allah's oneness as absolute in the sense that nothing else can exist, not even those who believe His oneness, thus concluding that describing Allah as the One is itself a violation of His oneness. This is how Al-Harawi unintentionally opened the doors for apostasy by those who would swear that they are "of Allah" and those who were deceived by the complete denial of the self-thinking that it is the absolute truth, thus going astray.⁽¹⁾

4. Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani (D. 502 A.H.) And The Moderate Rational Approach To Ethics

During the same period, Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani developed a new approach to Islamic ethics. This approach did not adopt any of the Sufi views, as it developed independently of the influence of Sufi scholars such as Al-Qushayri and Al-Ghazali. It was also quite different from the philosophical approach of Ibn Miskawayh who studied Greek philosophy and included his commentaries on it in his books, such as *Tahdhīb Al-Akhḷāq* (*The Refinement of Morals*). Al-Asfahani's work on

(1) *Madārij Al-Sālikīn* (The Stations of Remembrance), 1/167-168, ed. by Mohammed Al-Mu'tasim Billah Al-Baghdadi. Beirut: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi.

Islamic ethics cannot be classified as Salafi either, because he did not adopt Salafi views, and he was not as well-versed in Sunnah and Hadith studies as Salafi scholars were. In fact, he often quoted hadiths that were weak or false.

Al-Asfahani's work cannot be easily classified because he was an independent scholar who developed his own approach. He was, first and foremost, a Muslim who placed his faith above everything else, then engaged in academic analysis of ethics, which he called "the noble qualities of the Shari'a." I believe that Al-Asfahani is one of the best examples of Islamic scholarship; his works are deeply rooted in Sunni Muslim beliefs, and he did not blindly follow Greek philosophers, as the Islamic Peripatetic school did. Al-Asfahani based all his work on the Holy Qur'an. In fact, he was highly specialized in Qur'anic Studies, as clearly seen in his highly influential book *Mufradāt Al-Qur'ān* (*Lexicon of Qur'anic Vocabulary*), which is a unique resource that is considered one of canons of Qur'anic Studies across intellectual traditions. He also wrote *Tahqīq Al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'ān*, an incomplete exegesis of the Holy Qur'an that stops at the fifth chapter.

Al-Asfahani was a contemporary of Al-Ghazali; he was born shortly before Al-Ghazali and died three years after Al-Ghazali's death. Al-Ghazali was also said to be impressed by Al-Asfahani's *Al-Dharī'a fī Makārim Al-Sharī'a* (*The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Shari'a*). While the title of his book mentions Shari'a, Al-Asfahani was not concerned with jurisprudence and regulations of what is permissible and what is forbidden. Rather, the book is about the "noble qualities" of the Shari'a, which are the desirable personal traits and qualities. The title is actually derived from the hadith: "I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct" or "the noble qualities".⁽¹⁾

I had the opportunity to read earlier editions of this book when I was still in high school. At that time, I did not fully understand it, but I wished that someone would publish a critical edition that would help explain it and provide detailed information about the hadiths in it. It was Professor Abu Al-Yazid Al-Ajami, Professor of Creed and Philosophy at Dar Al-Ulum, who published such an edition many years later. However, I did not find many scholars who paid much attention to this book, until Professor Mustafa Hilmi, Professor of Creed and Philosophy at Dar Al-Ulum, who built on this edition to publish his valuable book *Al-Akhlaq bayna Al-Falāsifa wa 'Ulamā' Al-Islam* (*Ethics between Philosophers and Islamic Scholars*).

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8952), Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fī Ḥusn Al-Khuluq* (273), and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārīkh Al-Mutaqaddimīn* (2/613). It was also narrated in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with an addition, supported by Al-Dhahabi, and classified by Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (25).

Al-Asfahani: A True Sunni

When reading Al-Asfahani's book, one might think he was a Mutazilite, because of the way he focuses on intellectual argumentations, analyses, and comparisons. This is exactly what Al-Suyuti thought, as he writes in *Bughyat al-Wu'ah* (*Everything Desirable*), which includes biographies of Arabic philologists and grammarians, "I was initially under the impression that Al-Asfahani was a Mutazilite, but I saw Sheikh Badr Al-Din Al-Zarkashi's note in his own handwriting saying that Al-Asfahani was a Sunni Imam at the same level as Al-Ghazali. This is quite interesting because many people think Al-Asfahani was a Mutazilite."⁽¹⁾

Al-Suyuti's comment was rather surprising to me, for the Mutazilites have no monopoly on intellectual argumentation and analytical styles. The same styles and methodologies can be found in the works of Maturidi and Ashari scholars. More importantly, Al-Asfahani's books do not include any of the defining terminologies of the Mutazilites, such as "justice and unity" (monotheism) and "the intermediate position". Rather, his books, such as *Mufradāt Al-Qur'ān* (*Lexicon of Qur'anic Vocabulary*) and *Al-Dharī'a fī Makārim Al-Sharī'a* (*The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Shari'a*) clearly reflect his Sunni identity.

Al-Asfahani was accused of being a Shiite as discussed in Abu Al-Yazid Al-Ajami's edition, but there is hardly any evidence in support of this claim. The only evidence mentioned by Shiite scholars in this regard is Al-Asfahani's narrative on the Prophet's (PBUH) family history and Ali, but all Muslims share this narrative. In fact, there is nothing in Al-Asfahani's books or even in the biographies written about him that suggests his being a Shiite. However, there is this tendency among Shiite scholars to call established scholars, such as Al-Asfahani, Shiites. In order to understand where Al-Asfahani stands, I will quote from his introduction to *Al-Dharī'a fī Makārim Al-Sharī'a* (*The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Shari'a*):

"In my exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, *Tahqīq Al-Bayān fī Ta'wīl Al-Qur'ān*, I have explained the difference between the jurisprudence rules of Shari'a and its noble qualities. Those qualities are the ones that can be used to describe Allah, such as wisdom, generosity, patience, and forgivingness, even though these qualities apply to Allah differently from the way they apply to people. Jurisprudence, on the other hand, deals with these qualities but also with acts of worship. By gaining one of these noble qualities, an individual can be described as a "caliph" or a successor of Allah on earth, as He says in: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority" (Holy Qur'an, 2:30); "Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and

(1) *Bughyat al-Wu'āt* (*Everything Desirable*), 2/297, ed. by Mohammed Abu Al-Fadl Ibrahim, Beirut: Al-Maktaba Al-Asriyya.

grant you succession in the land and see how you will do” (Holy Qur’an, 7:129); and “It is He who has made you successors upon the earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you” (Holy Qur’an, 6:165). This type of succession happens only when one’s soul is purified, just like acts of worship are not accepted without the purification of the body.

I have asked Allah for guidance to write a book on these noble qualities to explain how people can attain the status of true worship, which Allah has made an honor to people, and how to achieve the status of succession, which is the honor Allah has made for those who truly believe. Only by following the Shari’a and applying these noble qualities can people reach this honorable status and be admitted to heaven. The reason I decided to write this book is that I saw how you, dear reader, wish to adorn yourself with these noble qualities and apply them into your life to achieve your ultimate goal:

When you meet a citron tree adorned

With beautiful flowers and fruit.

How unpleasant is a person who looks nice but has poor personal qualities. This person is like a paradise inhabited by owls or a flock of camels guarded by a wolf. A wise man once saw an ignorant but good looking man. He said: “The house is nice, but the tenant is not. The house can be full of luxurious furniture, but it is like an ox adorned with jewelry.”

Al-Asfahani’s Teachings

Al-Asfahani included many of his teachings in this book. For example, he writes:

- If you are knowledgeable and you apply your knowledge, you become one of “the allies of Allah; there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve” (Holy Qur’an, 10:62).
- Beware of Satan, for he might try to enslave you with worldly pleasures and make you one of his allies. He might also try to scare you, as Allah says: “That is only Satan who frightens [you] of his supporters. So fear them not, but fear Me, if you are [indeed] believers” (Holy Qur’an, 3:175).
- It is a shame to be an animal when one can choose to be human, or to be human when one can be an angel. This is like borrowing in a temporary life compared to owning in an eternal life:

Of all shortcomings nothing is more shameful than

Not acting when you can be a perfect man.

- If you want to know about scholars, think of Ali's words: "Those who hold the keys to the treasurers die while still alive, but scholars live as long as time does; their bodies go, but their work lives on in the heart."

In your pursuit of these noble qualities, do not be misled by those "who averted from the way of Allah and sought to make it [seem] deviant while they, concerning the Hereafter, were disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 11:19). Those are the ones whom Allah describes as "were not able to hear, nor did they see. Those are the ones who will have lost themselves, and lost from them is what they used to invent" (Holy Qur'an, 11:20-21). Allah compares those people to their opponents: "The example of the two parties is like the blind and deaf, and the seeing and hearing. Are they equal in comparison? Then, will you not remember?" (Holy Qur'an, 11:24). They are like the deaf and blind because they cannot perceive of the truths that can be heard and seen."⁽¹⁾

The book includes seven chapters:

- Chapter One: On the nature of humans: their powers, virtues, and morality
- Chapter Two: On the mind, science, and language
- Chapter Three: On the power of desire
- Chapter Four: On the power of anger
- Chapter Five: On justice, injustice, love and hatred
- Chapter Six: On professions, earnings, spending, and related qualities
- Chapter Seven: On human action and its various types

Since I cannot summarize the entire book here, I highly recommend reading it, and I wish the readers, as Al-Asfahani did in his introduction, "a light that would guide them to benefitting from it, the willpower to apply it to their lives, and for Allah to make us all among those He protects from the evils of Satan: 'Indeed, My servants - no authority will you have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators' (Holy Qur'an, 15:42), for Satan has promised: 'By Your might, I will surely mislead them all, Except, among them, Your chosen servants'" (38:82-83). Below, I include some excerpts from Al-Asfahani's book for readers' benefit:

(1) Al-Asfahani's *Al-Dharī'a fī Makaārim Al-Sharī'a* (The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Shari'a), ed. by Abu Al-Yazid Al-Ajami, Cairo: Dar Al-Salam, 2007, Pages 59-62.

What Distinguishes Humans From Other Creatures

Al-Asfahani writes: “Humans by definition are at the highest status of all Allah’s creatures on earth, but only if they adhere to what makes them truly human, namely true knowledge and working according to this knowledge. Being human, therefore, is a gradient attribute: the more these two criteria apply to a person, the more human he/she is. This is why people are considered the product of what they do best (knowledge and its application). As for the other aspects of humanity, humans are similar to plants in terms of their needs for nourishment and growth. They are also similar to animals in terms of their abilities to move and feel. What distinguishes humans is their ability to speak, their powers, and their purpose. This is why it is said that were it not for the tongue, humans are nothing but animals. It is the powers of knowledge, speech, and comprehension that make humans similar to angels, but humans can also be similar to animals in the way they eat and reproduce.

Those who focus on improving their intellectual abilities and the applications of their knowledge are worthy of being Allahly or even angel-like, as the women in the story of Joseph described him: “This is not a man; this is none but a noble angel” (Holy Qur’an, 12:31). Those who focus all their energies on their animalistic needs are worthy of being considered beasts, as humans can be gluttonous like pigs, insatiable like oxen, sightless like dogs, spiteful like camels, arrogant like tigers, or shrewd like foxes; or have all these qualities together and be like the devil: “those whom Allah has cursed and with whom He became angry and made of them apes and pigs and slaves of Taghut” (Holy Qur’an, 5:60).

Many people look like humans, but in reality they are more like animals. Allah says: “They are not except like livestock. Rather, they are [even] more astray in [their] way” (Holy Qur’an, 25:44), “Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason” (Holy Qur’an, 8:22), and “Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who have disbelieved, and they will not [ever] believe” (Holy Qur’an, 8:55). Those who do not believe, and who do not use the powers that Allah has endowed them with, are like animals: “The example of those who disbelieve is like that of one who shouts at what hears nothing but calls and cries cattle or sheep - deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.” (Holy Qur’an, 2:171). This theme appears in many classical poems, such as Al-Hakam Ibn Miqdad’s:

*Wickedness is more generous than a hare and its father,
And more generous than a hare and what it might father.*

Or Al-Mutanabbi’s

*I am surrounded by people whom I have to admit,
I am wrong to refer to them with anything but “it”.*

People are not equal by ethical deeds. You might find someone who is worth 10, or even 100, or 10 people who, put together, are not worth even one. Once a woman was asked in her sleep whether she preferred 10 men, or one man who is worth 10. She answered: "Of course, one who is worth 10." Some people are worth even 1,000, while 1,000 might not be worth one, as Al-Buhturi writes:

*I never saw the likes of men differ so much,
But when it comes to glory a thousand might be like one.*

You might even see one person who is worth 10,000, or 10,000 people who altogether are not worth one. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "People are like camels. You may see 100,000, but only one can be used to travel."⁽¹⁾ He also said: "I was weighed against my Ummah, and the scales tipped in my favor."⁽²⁾

On The Two Sides Of Humans

Human nature is based on two conflicting sides, since they share some of their properties with animals (such as eating and sexual desires) and others with angels (spiritual powers such as wisdom, justice, and generosity). Thus, humans are between these two contradicting natures: "And have shown him the two ways" (Holy Qur'an, 90:10). These natures represent intellectual/spiritual powers and desire, but they also represent the afterworld and this world. In other words, human nature is a mix of faith (being allied with Allah) and disbelief (being allied with Satan), as Allah says: "Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghut. They take them out of the light into darkness" (Holy Qur'an, 2: 257). It is also a mixture of light and dark as in the previous verse or a mixture of life and death as in: "And is one who was dead and We gave him life" (Holy Qur'an, 6:122). Those whom Allah has guided and given the power to fulfill their potential are the ones who follow the true path, but those who go astray are the ones who lose: "He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Holy Qur'an, 91:9-10).

On The Purpose Of The Creation Of Humans

People are all the same everywhere, as Al-Buhturi writes:

*Go east or west and find another friend.
The whole earth is but the same kind of dirt,
And all people are from the same man.*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Muslim (2547) and Ahmed (5619).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bazzar (4048).

What distinguishes one person from another is how they serve the purpose for which humanity was created. Each type of creature or invention has a function, without which it would not exist. For example, camels are for carrying people across deserts, while horses are for speedy travel to nearby places. Saws and chisels were invented to fix wooden things, such as doors, which were invented to protect houses. Humans are the same; they have specific functions:

1. To develop the earth, as Allah says: “He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it” (Holy Qur’an, 11:61). This settling and developing function serves the individual and the community by helping to provide better living conditions.
2. To worship Allah, as He says: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (Holy Qur’an, 51:56). This function is to obey Allah.
3. To succeed Him: “Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and grant you succession in the land and see how you will do” (Holy Qur’an, 7:129). This kind of succession involves applying the noble qualities of the Shari’a by emulating Allah as much as humanly possible. Those noble qualities include wisdom, justice, patience, and generosity. They all serve to qualify people to be admitted to Paradise.

The honor of every creature is to serve its purpose. If this purpose is not fully served, the creature loses its value, and it is either set aside or degraded in status. For example, a horse that cannot run fast in battle becomes an animal of burden or even food, and a sword that becomes blunt might be used as a saw. In the case of humans, however, if they do not serve their purpose, they become less than animals in status: “Those are like livestock; rather, they are more astray. It is they who are the heedless” (Holy Qur’an, 7:179).⁽¹⁾

The Means To Achieve The Status Of A Vicegerent Of Allah The Almighty

Al-Asfahani describes how one can become a successor of Allah. He writes: “One can become a successor of Allah by applying the noble qualities of the Shari’a. There are two types of means: those that have to do with one’s self and body, and those that have to do with treating others. Only by achieving the first group can one qualify to acquire the noble qualities of the latter type. This is why Allah rebukes those who order others to do good deeds and refrain from bad ones without applying those standards to themselves first. Allah says: ‘Do you order righteousness of

(1) Al-Asfahani’s *Al-Dhari’a fi Makaārim Al-Shari’a* (The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Shari’a), ed. by Abu Al-Yazid Al-Ajami, Cairo: Dar Al-Salam, 2007, Pages 79-83.

the people and forget yourselves while you recite the Scripture? Then will you not reason?’ (Holy Qur’an, 2:44); ‘Oh you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do? Great is hatred in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do’ (Holy Qur’an, 61:2-3); and ‘Oh you who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided’” (Holy Qur’an, 5:105).

This is the logic behind Caliph Omar’s statement: “Learn before you rule”. The leaders of a community need to be well learned, for the whole community will follow them. If the leaders follow Satan, so will the community: “Oh you who have believed, do not follow the footsteps of Satan. And whoever follows the footsteps of Satan - indeed, he enjoins immorality and wrongdoing” (Holy Qur’an, 24:21).

The Difference Between The Noble Qualities Of The Shari’a, Acts Of Worship, And Developing The Earth

Al-Asfahani writes in this regard: “The Noble Qualities of the Shari’a start with purifying the inner self. This purification occurs through learning and applying virtue, patience, and justice into actions. These noble qualities lead to acquiring wisdom, generosity, and forbearance. For example, learning leads to wisdom, virtue becomes generosity, patience develops into forbearance and courage, and justice evolves into perfection. Anyone who achieves those noble qualities has acquired righteousness: ‘Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you’ (Holy Qur’an, 39:13). Righteousness qualifies one to join the martyrs, the believers, and Allah’s people, thus becoming a successor. Worshipping is more general than noble qualities, because applying each noble quality is itself an act of worshipping, but not all acts of worship are applied noble qualities. Some acts of worship are specific religious obligations, and if they are not performed, one has incurred an injustice. Noble qualities, on the other hand, cannot be acquired without fulfilling one’s religious obligations first, because performing these acts of worship is a form of justice. Noble qualities are similar to extra acts of worship in that they are not accepted unless the obligatory ones are fulfilled first. For example, one has to act justly before acting generously. One can be excused if performing the obligatory acts of worship takes all his energy away from the extra ones, but only an arrogant person would leave the obligatory acts to fulfill the extra ones. Allah has favored justice over good conduct by mentioning it first in ‘Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct’ (Holy Qur’an, 16:90) and ‘Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed’ (Holy Qur’an, 22:77).

“Developing the earth involves all kinds of activities that help people improve their quality of life. This is a moral obligation, because people cannot survive and

thrive without being fed, clothed, and sheltered through permissible means. Allah says: 'Indeed, it is [promised] for you not to be hungry therein or be unclothed. And indeed, you will not be thirsty therein or be hot from the sun' (Holy Qur'an, 20:118-119). If one strives to fulfill these duties through permissible means, his actions are considered acts of worship and jihad, as the Prophet (PBUH) said: 'He who seeks sustenance as prescribed is in jihad; otherwise, his efforts are like scattered dust.'⁽¹⁾ Allah says: 'Say, [Oh Mohammed], Shall we [believers] inform you of the greatest losers as to [their] deeds? [They are] those whose effort is lost in worldly life, while they think that they are doing well in work' (Holy Qur'an, 18:103-104). This is when one becomes a servant for people rather than a servant of Allah. Such people can be considered among animals whom Allah has made subservient to people: 'And [He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment'" (Holy Qur'an, 16:8)."⁽²⁾

The Purity Of The Inner Self As A Requirement For Vicegerency Of The Almighty Allah And The Perfection Of Worship

Al-Asfahani writes: "Only those with pure inner selves can qualify to succeed Allah on His earth. Just like bodies have their impurities, inner selves have their own impurities, but the difference is that bodily impurities can be seen by the eyes, but the impurities of the inner self can only be seen by the eye of the heart. It is those impurities that are meant in 'indeed the polytheists are unclean' (Holy Qur'an, 9:28); 'And uncleanliness avoid' (Holy Qur'an, 74:5); and 'Thus does Allah place defilement upon those who do not believe' (Holy Qur'an, 6:125).

"The purity of the inner self is a prerequisite for succeeding Allah on His earth, because succession here means having and applying His attributes as much as humanly possible. If the inner self is not pure, one's acts and words cannot be pure, for they are mere reflections of the core: 'A faithful person is better than his deeds, and a non-believer is more evil than his deeds'⁽³⁾ Allah says: 'Evil words are for evil men, and evil men are [subjected] to evil words. And good words are for

(1) I could not find this hadith anywhere in hadith resources, but this is exactly how the author stated it. Since he is not a hadith specialist, we cannot take it at face value. Perhaps he meant the hadith narrated via Kab Ibn Ujrah, "If he went out to earn what he supports his young children with, then he is in the cause of Allah. If he went out to support his elderly parents, then he is in the cause of Allah. If he went out to support himself and preserve his honor (such as from begging), then he is in the cause of Allah. If he went out for the purpose of showing off and pride, he is in the cause of Satan." This hadith is narrated by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Kabir* (19/129) and *Al-Awsat* (6835), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2610), Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (7709), and Al-Albani in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (1692).

(2) Ibid, 84-86.

(3) Al-Asfahani does specify whether he thought this statement was a hadith. I could not find it in hadith resources. It is most likely a quote by Ali. See *Nahj Al-Balāghah*, 665.

good men, and good men are [an object] of good words' (Holy Qur'an, 24:26); and 'The good land - its vegetation emerges by permission of its Lord; but that which is bad - nothing emerges except sparsely, with difficulty' (7:58). Since the deeds of those with evil inner selves cannot be good, Allah says: 'They are the ones whose hearts Allah has tested for righteousness' (Holy Qur'an, 49:3). The hadith 'Angels do not enter a house that has a dog'⁽¹⁾ is sometimes interpreted as a metaphor meaning that Allah's light does not enter a heart that is filled with envy and stinginess. As for purity, Allah says: 'And your clothing purify, and uncleanness avoid' (Holy Qur'an, 74:4-5); 'Allah intends only to remove from you the impurity [of sin], Oh people of the [Prophet's] household, and to purify you with [extensive] purification' (Holy Qur'an, 33:33); 'Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you' (Holy Qur'an, 5:6); and 'Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves' (Holy Qur'an, 2:222). Some scholars argue that the Arabic word *ḥawariyūn* 'the apostles of Jesus' is derived from the verb *ḥawwar* 'to whiten' as a metaphor for the cleansing of people's hearts."

Al-Asfahani on Self-Purification

Al-Asfahani dedicates an entire chapter to the issue of self-purification. He writes: "Knowledge and acts of worship purify the soul, so that one can qualify to serve as Allah's successor on His earth, hence salvation. Water purifies the body, thus maintaining its health and vitality. This is why Allah calls water 'life' and refers to the Holy Qur'an as 'water'. Allah says, 'Oh you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life' (Holy Qur'an, 8:24). Knowledge and acts of worship are to the soul like water to the body; if the soul is deprived of them, it dies. Allah says: 'We made from water every living thing. Then will they not believe?' (Holy Qur'an, 21:30) and 'He sends down from the sky rain, and valleys flow according to their capacity' (Holy Qur'an 13:17). Abbas, may Allah be pleased with him, interprets the term 'water' in these verses as a metaphor for the Holy Qur'an; the hearts are represented as valleys and the Holy Qur'an as water. Other scholars have adopted similar interpretations to other verses, such as: 'We send down from the sky pure water' (Holy Qur'an, 24:48), and 'He sent down upon you from the sky rain, by which to purify you' (Holy Qur'an, 8:11). These interpretations are supported by the verse: 'And We send down from the Holy Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believer' (Holy Qur'an, 17:82). The argument here is that the Holy Qur'an is different from water in the literal sense. The Holy Qur'an, was sent down from above to purify the hearts in ways that no water can, whereas

(1) Narrated via Abu Talha by Al-Bukhari (3225) and Muslim (2106).

the water that comes down in the form of rain can be replaced with water that springs up from the ground.

“The soul needs to be purified from the negative aspects of the three powers. The power of intellect is purified to achieve wisdom and knowledge. The power of desire is purified to achieve virtue and generosity. The power of anger is purified to achieve courage and patience. Once these powers are purified, the soul achieves justice. The lack of purification allows the negative aspects of these powers to become dominant. The corruption of intellect leads to the lack of intelligence. The corruption of desire leads to gluttony or the loss of appetite. The corruption of anger leads to cowardice and impulsiveness. All these forms of corruption lead to injustice and sin.”⁽¹⁾

I wish I had more space to include more excerpts from Al-Asfahani’s book to present more of his arguments, which combine faith and science with innovation. The comprehensive approach developed by Al-Asfahani is what motivated Dr. Agami to call it a “social ethics” and a “religious ethics”. I can see how Al-Asfahani’s work can be labeled social ethics, but I have my reservations on the term “religious ethics”. My criticism is that what Al-Asfahani demonstrated is an ethical system that is specifically Islamic, not a religious ethics in the broader sense that applies to religion as an abstract social construct.

The main critique of Al-Asfahani’s work on ethics is that he establishes a distinction between the noble qualities of the Shari’a and the jurisprudence of Shari’a. This distinction is based on his assumption that acts of worship are more general in nature than noble qualities. In explaining this distinction, he writes: “Unlike the noble qualities of the Shari’a, acts of worship are specific requirements. Not performing them is an act of injustice. However, these acts of worship are a prerequisite for achieving the noble qualities. Performing acts of worship with diligence is a form of justice, but the pursuit of the noble qualities is an act of generosity toward oneself”. Allah says, “Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct” (Holy Qur’an, 16:90) and “Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed” (Holy Qur’an, 22:77).⁽²⁾ The issue here is that we cannot treat the pursuit of noble qualities as a personal choice, because they are deeply rooted in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah. In fact, these qualities are among the “acts of the heart” that the Holy Qur’an requires for salvation: “The day when there will not benefit [anyone] wealth or children - But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart” (Holy Qur’an, 26:88-89) and “Who feared the Most Merciful unseen and came with a heart returning [in repentance]” (Holy Qur’an, 50:33).

(1) Ibid, Pages 78-89.

(2) Ibid, Page 85.

There are many Qur'anic verses and hadiths that emphasize the importance of moral values. In fact, these values are required to achieve success and salvation. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise."⁽¹⁾ Allah says: "Indeed, those who like that immorality should be spread [or publicized] among those who have believed will have a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows and you do not know" (Holy Qur'an, 24:19), and "Oh you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. Oh you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy or backbite each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:11-12). There are many other verses that warn people against such poor qualities as the love of this world, accumulating wealth, seeking power, slander, gossip, and others that Al-Ghazali calls "the ways to perdition".

Many of the noble qualities of the Shari'a are fundamental to faith, not just optional acts of worship. Perhaps, the best argument in support of this claim comes from the verse: "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct" (Holy Qur'an, 16:90). This verse demonstrates clearly that people are commanded to be just, i.e., it is not a mere recommendation. Good conduct is a requirement no matter how it is interpreted. Muslim narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. Every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably."⁽²⁾

In his commentary on the verse "Do good - that you may succeed" (Holy Qur'an, 22:77) Al-Asfahani writes: "Doing good is an extra act of worship."⁽³⁾ This is where we disagree with him. Doing good deeds is a requirement, as one can see from the context of the same verse: "Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed" (Holy Qur'an, 22:77).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim in his chapter on faith (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud in his section on clothing (4091).

(2) Narrated via Shaddad Ibn Aws by Muslim in his chapter on hunting and slaughtering (1955), Ahmed (17113), Abu Dawud on sacrificed animals (2815).

(3) *Al-Dhari'a*, 85.

Al-Asfahani Vs. Ibn Miskawayh

Al-Asfahani and Ibn Miskawayh had a shared concern, namely how people can be spiritually elevated. They were both interested in the well-being of the community in this world and the salvation of the individual in the afterlife. Both scholars see happiness in the purification of the essence of the individual. Allah says: “For them who have done good is the best [reward] and much more. No darkness will cover their faces, nor humiliation. Those are companions of Paradise; they will abide therein eternally” (Holy Qur’an, 10:26), and “Unquestionably, [for] the allies of Allah there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve - Those who believed and were fearing Allah - For them are good tidings in the worldly life and in the Hereafter” (Holy Qur’an, 10:62-64).

There are however some interesting differences between the approaches developed by Al-Asfahani and Ibn Miskawayh. The latter’s approach was highly influenced by Greek philosophy, even though he was well informed about Islamic culture. After all, he lived in a Muslim community and had extensive contact with Muslim scholars. However, he did not delve deeply into Islamic scholarship, jurisprudence, and spirituality. He was similar to those described in: “There was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of understanding. Never was the Holy Qur’an a narration invented, but a confirmation of what was before it and a detailed explanation of all things and guidance and mercy for a people who believe” (Holy Qur’an, 12:111). Al-Asfahani, on the other hand, was fully immersed in Islamic culture, as can be seen in his exegesis of the Holy Qur’an. His vast knowledge of Arab culture is obvious in his four-volume book *Muḥāḍarāt Al-Uḍabā’ wa-Muḥāwarāt Al-Shu’arā’ wal-Bulaghā’* (*The Dialogues of Poets and Writers*). He developed even his own philosophy, which was not influenced by Greek philosophers or any “First Teachers”. He did not think of their works as sacred texts.

The philosophy that is often referred to as “Islamic philosophy” is a mere imitation of foreign world views. It should not be considered Islamic, because it is not based on the text of the Holy Qur’an or the Sunnah. The so-called Islamic philosophy is not even based on the biographies of the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions or the canons of Islamic scholarship. We saw earlier how Al-Ghazali refuted their arguments and called them apostates. Al-Ghazali focused on their three main theses: (a) that the world predates existence, i.e., it was not created by Allah, (b) that Allah is not aware of the details of the world, and (c) that resurrection is impossible. These claims amount to arguing that there is no heaven or hell, which contradicts the Holy Qur’an. Al-Asfahani did not follow this path like other renowned “Islamic philosophers”. He only adopted some of the good aspects of these intellectual traditions, but he stayed away from their polytheistic and materialistic ideologies. Al-Asfahani articulated his philosophy in *Al-Dharī’a* and in another book entitled *Tafṣīl Al-Nash’atayn* (*The Details of the Two Beginnings*), which was edited by the Tunisian scholar Dr. Abdul Majeed Al-Najjar.

2.5 Religious Ethics And The Theory Of Divine Revelation

All the theories of morality we have discussed thus far have one basic assumption in common: mankind is the source of moral obligation. Specifically, moral obligation stems from intellectual and aesthetic desire. The theory we discuss in this chapter is quite different, because it sees Allah as the only source of moral obligation. Allah has sent down His divine revelations to particular individuals whom He chose to teach people how to act morally. Allah ordered those individuals to spread His word and teach others, warn them, and bring them good tidings, so that there will be no excuse for those who refuse to act accordingly.

This theory is based on the premise that human intellect and conscience are not the judges of what is moral and what is not, for these vary from time to time, and from culture to culture. Human intellect is limited by its very nature, and it cannot determine what acts Allah likes or dislikes. People cannot answer on behalf of Allah. Human conscience is not fit to serve as a moral compass either. We have seen many examples in many cultures of people committing the most heinous acts with clear conscience. This is why people needed an infallible guide who could show them the way, correct them when they make mistakes, and serve as judge when they dispute morality. Allah has given people a guide that does not forget or do injustice. This guide is the revelation which is the foundation of religious ethics. This premise is the cornerstone of the three monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Ethics In Judaism

Divine revelation is seen in Judaism as a one-time event that took place when Moses received the Ten Commandments and the Torah on top of Mount Sinai. This revelation, or the Torah, is in five books that include the Jewish Shari'a, particularly in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. There is little mention of ethics in these books, as they mostly deal with the history of the Israelites and the jurisprudence of everyday life. There is also quite a bit of description regarding rituals, such as how to build the Ark of the Covenant, how to make a menorah, how rabbis should dress, how to prepare burnt offerings, and the like. As for ethics, the Ten Commandments constitute the core of the Torah: "And God spoke all these words, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery:

- You shall have no other gods before me.
- You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God,

punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation⁽¹⁾ of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

- You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the Lord made the heaven and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day.⁽²⁾ Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
- You shall not murder.
- You shall not commit adultery.
- You shall not steal.
- You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.
- You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."⁽³⁾

The Ten Commandments actually mention only one good moral quality, namely honoring one's parents, which is referred to in Arabic as *bir* "devotion", a higher level of caring than just "honoring". What is interesting is that the Commandments mention six negative qualities (murder, adultery, stealing, etc.) all used in negated sentences. Also, we see some repetition, especially in the ones related to neighbors.⁽⁴⁾ In other words, the Ten Commandments are in fact only five.

(1) In Islam, only the person who commits a crime can be punished: "And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (Holy Qur'an, 6:164), and "Or has he not been informed of what was in the scriptures of Moses - And [of] Abraham, who fulfilled [his obligations] - That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another - And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives" (53:36-39).

(2) The Holy Qur'an addresses this claim in "And We did certainly create the heavens and earth and what is between them in six days, and there touched Us no weariness" (Holy Qur'an, 50:38).

(3) Exodus 20: 1-10 and Deuteronomy 5:6-21.

(4) Traditionally, Jews would live next each other, which suggests that these commandments apply only to Jewish neighbors.

Other Judaic texts that address ethics include: “If a man takes the life of any human being, he shall surely be put to death. The one who takes the life of an animal shall make it good, life for life. If a man injures his neighbor, just as he has done, so it shall be done to him: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth ...” (Leviticus 24:17-20.) There are also many texts that command kindness toward widows, orphans, slaves, the elderly, and others. The Torah also forbids usury, for it says: “Do not charge your brother interest, whether on money or food or anything else that may earn interest” (Deuteronomy, 23:19). However, it is not clear what is meant by “brother”. Is it a brother in humanity or a fellow Israelite? But the same verse makes it clear that it is the latter meaning: “You may charge a foreigner interest, but not a fellow Israelite (Deuteronomy, 23:19-20); “Every creditor shall cancel any loan they have made to a fellow Israelite. They shall not require payment from anyone among their own people, because the Lord’s time for canceling debts has been proclaimed. You may require payment from a foreigner, but you must cancel any debt your fellow Israelite owes you. However, there need be no poor people among you (Deuteronomy, 15:2-4); and “If you lend money to one of my people among you who is needy, do not treat it like a business deal; charge no interest” (Exodus, 22:25). Other verses that directly address ethics include: “Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God” (Leviticus, 19:14).

What is the source of moral obligation in Judaism? Why should anyone adhere to these commandments? The Torah mentions only one reason: God. It is God who freed the Israelites from slavery, and He has commanded that these commandments be applied. God wants to be obeyed. Those who obey are promised their reward, and those who disobey are promised their punishment. In Judaism, reward and punishment are closely tied to consequences in this world, such as wealth, health, children, and victory over enemies. There is very little mention of reward or punishment in the afterlife.

An Overview On Ethics In Judaism

The moral commandments of Judaism, which predate all moral philosophies, was a quantum leap in human development thanks to the values it introduced. It is critical to note here that moral standards in Judaism were established in the name of religion and in the name of God who rewards those who heed His call and punishes those who do not. There are, however, some interesting issues to point out:

1. Judaism takes a militaristic approach to ethics, because God is seen as a military leader or king who has to be obeyed just because He is “the jealous god” who would punish four generations for the sins of some people. The only way to avoid God’s wrath is to passively submit to Him

willingly or otherwise and regardless of one's convictions. This is why God is often referred to in Judaism as a warrior.⁽¹⁾

2. The punishments and rewards are mostly materialistic. For example, they have to do with health, wealth, children, beauty, and other things of an earthly nature. There is hardly any mention of spiritual rewards or punishments in this world or the afterlife. In fact, there is nothing in the Torah that encourages people to do good deeds out of love or for God's sake only.
3. The punishments and rewards tend to be rather excessive, which is different from what is known about Allah's justice. For example, in the Torah, God would forgive the believers and their progeny for a thousand generations, but also punishes the sinners for four generations. Justice, which is intuitive, is what is meant by "No bearer of burden will bear the burden of another - And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives" (Holy Qur'an, 53:38-40).
4. Jewish traditions focus mainly on ritualistic aspects of worship rather than the sincerity of the heart, which is a main focus in Christianity and Islam. Allah says: "Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion" (Holy Qur'an, 39:11).
5. The eye-for-an-eye approach to justice is the cornerstone of ethics in the Torah. The idea of forgiveness or turning the other cheek does not arise in this moral system, or at least it is not fully articulated.
6. Jewish ethics is based on a nationalist and racist foundation, as many ethical acts apply to Jews but not to others. For example charging interest when lending money is forbidden if the debtor is Jewish, but it is permissible when lending to non-Jews. Even God in the Torah is not the God of all people. He is the God of the Israelites. In short, Jewish ethics is based on the concept of God's chosen people or God's children. The properties and beliefs of non-Jews are not protected. The teachings of the Talmud built on those moral standards. No wonder the Holy Qur'an depicts the Israelites in a negative light: "That is because they say, 'There is no blame upon us concerning the unlearned'. And they speak untruth about Allah while they know [it]" (Holy Qur'an, 3:75). The "unlearned" in this context refers to non-Jews.
7. The biographies of the prophets were significantly distorted in the Old Testament, and many evil acts that make people's skin crawl were attributed to them. These distortions have undermined the roles of these prophets as role models for moral behavior.

(1) See Exodus, 15:3.

Ethics In Christianity

Christians believe in the Old Testament (the Torah) as much as they believe in the New Testament. This is because they are both divine revelations, and, together, they are called the Bible. Jesus said: "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill" (Matthew, 5:17). Thus, Jesus reaffirmed the Ten Commandments, and even added "Love your neighbor". We can summarize the foundations of Christian ethics in the following points:

1. Jesus emphasized the moral qualities that undermine pride, such as meekness, mercifulness, and forgiveness: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew, 5:3), and "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth'. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous" (Matthew, 5:38-45).
2. The New Testament encourages people to refrain from the pursuit of worldly possessions and accumulating wealth. Jesus said to a new believer: "If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew, 19:21). He also said, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew, 19:23-24); "You cannot serve God and wealth" (Matthew, 6:24).
3. Christianity focuses on salvation, which is seen as the ultimate bliss in heaven: "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Matthew, 16:26). Christianity also focuses more on the individual rather than the community: "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew, 22:21).
4. Jesus rebuked those who are focused only on mechanically performing rituals without putting their hearts into them. Those are the ones who forbade doing good deeds on the Sabbath, even if it was treating a sick person. When a man fell ill on the Sabbath, Jesus treated him and God cured him. Jesus said: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for

the Sabbath” (Mark, 2:27). He also rebuked the hypocrites who cared only for the purity of the body but ignored the purity of the soul: “When the Pharisee saw it, he was surprised that he had not first ceremonially washed before the meal. But he said to him: ‘Now you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and of the platter; but inside of you, you are full of robbery and wickedness. You foolish ones, did not He who made the outside make the inside also?’” (Luke, 11:38-40). He also said: “It is not what enters into the mouth that defiles the man, but what proceeds out of the mouth, this defiles the man” (Mathew, 15:11).

Contrasting Jewish And Christian Approaches To Ethics

If we compare Jewish and Christian approaches to ethics, we notice some interesting points:

1. Judaism is mostly interested in this world, even rewards and punishments are in this world. Christianity, however, sees happiness to exist only in God’s Kingdom of Heaven, for this world is seen only as an exile. Jesus says: “Do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” (Mathew, 6:25). He also says: “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Matthew, 19:21). Christian ethics led to the development of monasticism, which eventually became widespread during the Middle Ages, but it went to extremes.
2. Judaism established the eye-for-an-eye principle with very little room for forgiveness, but as we mentioned earlier, Jesus says: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also” (Matthew, 5:38-39).
3. Judaism emphasizes the ritualistic aspects of worship, but the Bible makes it clear that rituals are meaningless unless they are performed with a sincere heart: “If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering” (Matthew, 5:23-24).
4. Christianity came as a powerful wave of spirituality to counter the materialistic and ritualistic tendencies of Judaism. Usually, when countering an extreme, another extreme needs to be introduced, but only temporarily. The new extreme cannot be permanent; it is necessary to introduce a bal-

anced approach. This was the function of Islam, which came to serve as the Middle-Ground Ummah: “And thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you” (Holy Qur’an, 2:143).

With the introduction of Islam people no longer have to turn the other cheek. They choose to do so only if that is what they think is justice. Allah says: “Whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you” (Holy Qur’an, 2:194); “And if you punish [an enemy, Oh believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient” (Holy Qur’an, 16:126); and “The retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers” (Holy Qur’an, 42:40).

Moreover, moral statements such as: “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mathew, 19:23-24) are rather extreme. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) says in this regard: “Sound property is very excellent for a sound man”⁽¹⁾ and “The wealth of none of you has benefited me as much as the wealth of Abu Bakr”⁽²⁾. Allah says: “And He found you [Mohammed] poor and made [you] self-sufficient” (Holy Qur’an, 93:8). Some of the prophet’s companions were grateful to be wealthy, such as Othman Ibn Affan and Abdul Rahman Ibn Awf. The Holy Qur’an also notes that David and Solomon were given substantial wealth and rule.

Ethics In Islam Compared To Judaism And Christianity

Judaism emerged at a particular time in human history, and it was specific to a particular group of people. In fact, the Torah itself states that it is not meant to be a message that applies to all people in all time periods. This is why Allah entrusted the scholars of Israelites to protect their scripture, unlike the Holy Qur’an, which is protected directly by Allah. As a result, the Torah underwent many changes over time. We see, for example, that the Old Testament includes many questionable stories about the prophets. We also see that the Torah focuses on the materialistic, ritualistic, and sometimes violent aspects of humanity, with a clear racial bias.

Christianity came to counter the extreme materialistic elements that prevailed

(1) Narrated via Amr Ibn Al-As via Ahmed (sound; 17763), Ibn Hibban on *Zakat* (strong; 3210), Al-Bukhari on good moral character (399), and Al-Bayhaqi (1248), and Al-Albani (corrected; 3756).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 7446), Al-Tirmidhi (3661), Ibn Majah in *Al-Muqaddima* (94), and Al-Albani in *Al-Sahīḥa* (corrected; 2718).

in Jewish and Roman societies alike. It was a potent antidote of spirituality, but such an antidote, which is itself an extreme in the opposite direction, can only be applied temporarily until balance is established. Christian idealism was not meant to be a permanent Shari'a either. This is why its followers, especially in the West, could not stay true to its forgiving and meek nature. Christian values and articles of faith also changed over time, as the churches introduced monasticism and other innovations.

Islam came to serve as Allah's last message to people, a message that is addressed to all people until the end of the world. This is why Allah has protected it, and not a single word in the Holy Qur'an was altered throughout the centuries. Allah says: "Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian" (Holy Qur'an, 15:9).

Characteristics Of Islamic Ethics

The Islamic approach to ethics is different from its counterparts in Judaism and Christianity. It is these differences that qualify Islamic ethics to apply across communities, social classes, nations, and time periods. Below is a summary of these differences:

1. Islamic ethics is free from the top-down approach of Jewish ethics, in the sense that acting morally is not an issue of blindly obeying commandments. Rather, Islamic ethics is based on intellectual arguments, i.e., there are good reasons for people to act morally. For example, Allah says: "Establish prayer. Indeed, prayer prohibits immorality and wrongdoing, and the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows that which you do" (Holy Qur'an, 29:45). We quite often see explanations for moral behavior in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says: "Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase" (Holy Qur'an, 9:103), and "Oh you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 2:183). We see this pattern consistently when decreeing acts of worship, as in the case of the *Hajj*: "That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days" (Holy Qur'an, 22:28), and in the case of social interactions: "Not equal are the good deeds and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend" (Holy Qur'an, 41:34); "Oh you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient one with information, investigate, lest you harm people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:6); and "Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you

from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?” (Holy Qur’an, 5:91). We even see generalized theoretical explanations, as in: “Oh you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for prayer on Friday, then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave your trade. That is better for you, if you only knew” (Holy Qur’an, 62:9), and “Say, ‘I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure’” (Holy Qur’an, 6:145).

2. Islamic ethics is universal in the sense that it does not discriminate between Muslims and non-Muslims. All people are equal in Islamic ethics. For example, charging interest is forbidden whether the debtor is a Muslim or not, theft is forbidden whether it is stealing from a Muslim or a non-Muslim, and adultery is forbidden whether it is committed with a Muslim or a non-Muslim. Justice is a moral imperative whether one is interacting with a Muslim or a non-Muslim: “Oh you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do” (Holy Qur’an 6:8). Thus, Islamic ethics is applicable to all regardless of race, tribal affiliation, or faith. Islamic ethics is not meant to cultivate a good citizen. Rather, it aims to cultivate a good person who acts morally with all people, because all people descend from Adam, and they were all created by Allah. This is quite different from the way moral commandments are issued in the Bible, where we do not see calls on all people. Conversely, we see such calls in the Holy Qur’an as: “Oh people”, “Oh children of Adam”, or “Oh mankind”. For example, Allah says: “Oh mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul and created from it its mate and dispersed from both of them many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs” (Holy Qur’an, 4:1). In this verse, the word “wombs” refers to all of humanity in addition to family relations. We see the same kind of calls in: “Oh mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted” (Holy Qur’an, 49:13).
3. Islamic ethics is compatible with sound human instincts, for they share the same source: Allah who created those instincts and ethics alike. Those sound instincts, such as the need for the One God, are the internal moral compass people have in the absence of external factors: “Direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah of Allah [sound instincts] upon which He has created [all] people. No change should there be in the

creation of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 30:30). The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Every person is born according to the true nature. It is subsequently his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a worshipper of fire.”⁽¹⁾

Islam acknowledges human needs, drives, and tendencies. This is why Islamic ethics helps regulate them in ways that protect society and the individual alike. For example, Islamic Shari’a allows people to enjoy the pleasant things in life and private property. It does not even view basic human needs as evil from Satan. Islam encourages people to purify their bodies and look pleasant: “Oh children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess” (Holy Qur’an, 7:31). We see many examples of this balance in the Sunnah. The Prophet (PBUH) once said: “He who has a modicum of arrogance in his heart will not enter heaven.” One of his companions said: “I like to wear beautiful clothes and shoes. Is that considered arrogance?” The Prophet (PBUH) answered: “Allah is Beautiful, He loves beauty.”⁽²⁾ A man named Hanthalah thought that he had lost his faith, because when he was with the Prophet he experienced a state of spiritual purity, but when he went home his feelings toward his wife and children distracted him. The Prophet said to him: “Oh Hanthalah, there is a time for this and a time for that.”⁽³⁾

What the Holy Qur’an strictly rejects is for people to forbid enjoying the beauty Allah has created for them: “Say: ‘Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?’ Say: ‘They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection’. Thus do We detail the verses for a people who know” (Holy Qur’an, 7:32). The main theme of the Prophet’s message is summarized in the verse: “Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel, who enjoins upon them what is right and forbids them what is wrong and makes lawful for them the good things and prohibits for them the evil and relieves them of their burden and the shackles which were upon them. So they who have believed in him, honored him, supported him and followed the light which was sent down with him - it is those who will be the successful.” (Holy Qur’an, 7:157). Compare: “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew, 19:23-24) to the Prophet’s (PBUH) hadith: “Sound property is very excellent for a sound man.”⁽⁴⁾ While the Bible commands: “Do

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on funerals (1358) and Muslim on fate (2658).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim on faith (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud on clothing (4091).

(3) Narrated via Hanthalah by Muslim on repentance (2750).

(4) Narrated via Amr Ibn Al-As via Ahmed (sound; 17763), Ibn Hibban on *Zakat* (strong; 3210), Al-Bukhari on good moral character (399), and Al-Bayhaqi (1248), and Al-Albani (corrected; 3756).

not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing" (Mathew, 6:25), the Holy Qur'an commands people to seek Allah's bounty even during the *Hajj*: "And proclaim to the people the *Hajj*; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass - That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. So eat of them and feed the miserable and poor" (22:27-28); "There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty from your Lord [during *Hajj*]. But when you depart from 'Arafat, remember Allah at al-Mash' ar al-haram" (2:198); and "It is He who made the earth tame for you - so walk among its slopes and eat of His provision - and to Him is the resurrection" (67:15).

While Christianity developed a strict monastic system that deprives people from satisfying their basic needs, Islam prohibits monasticism. Islam encourages marriage and supporting families, both of which are considered types of *jihad*. However, Islam restricts how far one can go to seek pleasure in order to protect individuals and society from going to extremes.

4. Islamic ethics is also realistic in that it is not designed for a particular group of people who live in an idealistic world. Islamic ethics is designed to be compatible with the reality of human nature, which involves basic needs, greed, hopes, and self-preservation, in addition to a powerful desire to be spiritual. For example, the Holy Qur'an does not dictate that people should love their enemies, or bless those who curse them. Certainly, a few people can do this, but only in rare circumstances. What the Holy Qur'an commands is to be just with enemies and not to let enmity turn to aggression: "Do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness" (Holy Qur'an, 5:8). This is what faithful people can aspire to, which is in itself quite a formidable feat. Furthermore, the Holy Qur'an does not command people to turn the other cheek.⁽¹⁾ As one sees in everyday reality, it is very rare for people to be able to do that. Rather, the Holy Qur'an commands: "The retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers" (Holy Qur'an, 42:40), and "If you punish [an enemy, Oh believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient" (Holy Qur'an, 16:126). These verses establish

(1) One wonders if Jesus actually said these words, because they seem to contradict what he said when the high priest's servant slapped him. Jesus did not turn the other cheek, but said, "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John, 18:23).

justice, but those who wish to achieve human perfection can choose to forgive. What Islam categorically forbids is aggression: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors" (Holy Qur'an, 2:190). This is how Islam establishes a realistic balance between the eye-for-an-eye justice of Judaism and the idealistic forgiveness of Christianity.

Another example of this balance is how Islamic ethics deals with lust. The New Testament, which states: "If your eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of hell" (Mathew, 18:9-10). Islam, in contrast, orders the faithful, both men and women, to lower their gaze. Allah says: "Tell the believers to avert their gaze and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do" (Holy Qur'an, 24:31), while the next verse states: "And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed" (Holy Qur'an, 24:31). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Do not give a second look, (because) while you are not to blame for the first, you have no right to the second."⁽¹⁾

In summary, Islamic ethics does not expect people to be as pure as infallible angels who do not err. Islamic ethics acknowledges the dual nature of mankind, which is a mixture of good and evil. People do make mistakes, but they always have the choice to repent and purify themselves. It is persisting in sin that is not acceptable. Adam, May Peace be upon Him, sinned, but he also asked Allah for forgiveness. It is no surprise that his descendants sinned and repented also. In the description of the qualities of the faithful, Allah says: "And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know" (Holy Qur'an, 3: 135). The Holy Qur'an also offers a gradient approach to human error, as sins are classified into major and minor infractions, with the minor ones forgiven as long as the major ones are not committed: "If you avoid the major sins from which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise]" (Holy Qur'an, 4:31).

Another element of realism in Islamic ethics is that it makes allowances for necessities and exceptional circumstances. These allowances contrast with other approaches to ethics that have final judgments with no exceptions.⁽²⁾ For example, when the Holy Qur'an lists the kinds of food that are forbidden, it adds an excep-

(1) Narrated via Buraydah by Ahmed in his *Musnad* (22991), Abu Dawud on marriage (2149), and Al-Tirmidhi on manners (2777).

(2) See, for example, Kant's determinism.

tion clause: “He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 2: 173). Islam also has provisions for forgiveness when people commit sins when absolutely necessary, or when under duress. These provisions also apply to required acts of worship, which are reduced or postponed due to sickness or travel for example: “Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship” (Holy Qur’an, 2:185).

5. Islam takes a positive approach to ethics. People do not adhere to moral values just to conform or to passively comply with commandments. Rather, they are encouraged to strive with confidence in their pursuit to achieve ethics. Allah says: “Take the Scripture with determination” (Holy Qur’an, 19:12); “Take what We have given you with determination” (Holy Qur’an, 7:171); “Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy” (Holy Qur’an, 28:26); and “Despair not of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people” (Holy Qur’an, 12:87).

The hadiths of the Prophet (PBUH) reiterate this positive attitude. He says: “Adhere to that which is beneficial for you. Keep asking Allah for help and do not refrain from it. If you are afflicted in any way, do not say: ‘If I had taken this or that step, it would have resulted into such and such’, but say only: ‘Allah so determined and so He willed’. The word ‘if’ opens the gates of evil thoughts.”⁽¹⁾ In his prayers, the Prophet seeks Allah’s refuge from weakness. He says: “O Allah! I seek refuge with You from worry and grief, from incapacity and laziness, from cowardice and miserliness, from being heavily in debt and from being overpowered by (other) men.”⁽²⁾ Islam refuses defeatism which we see in the words of Moses’ followers: “Oh Moses, indeed we will not enter this town, ever, as long as they are within it; so go, you and your Lord, and fight. Indeed, we are staying right here” (Holy Qur’an, 5:24). The faithful are expected to be positive and proactive, just as the Prophet’s companions said: “Go, you and your Lord, we are fighting on your side.”⁽³⁾

Adhering To The Truth And Promoting Good

Islamic ethics is collaborative by design. It is not sufficient for an individual to act morally. People are required to promote moral behavior and to encourage others

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on fate (2664), Ahmed (8791), and Ibn Majah in his introduction (79).

(2) Narrated via Anas by Al-Bukhari on prayers (2893), Abu Dawud on supplications (1541), Al-Tirmidhi on supplications (3484), and Al-Nasa’i on seeking refuge (5450).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Masoud via Al-Bukhari on Qur’anic exegesis (4609).

to act morally. This collaborative approach helps to establish a moral society which benefits the individual as well, because an individual cannot act morally if constantly surrounded by moral corruption. Allah says: "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 3:110); "By time, Indeed, mankind is in loss, except for those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to truth and exhort one another to endurance" (Holy Qur'an, 103:1-3); and "[Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travelers [in His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah. And give good tidings to the believers" (Holy Qur'an, 9:112); and "Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed. They used not to prevent one another from wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing" (Holy Qur'an, 5:78-79). The Prophet (PBUH) also says: "Religion is giving sincere advice"⁽¹⁾ and "He who does not care about the wellbeing of the Muslims is not one of them."⁽²⁾

Combatting Moral Corruption By Every Means

The Islamic proactive approach to ethics requires individuals to do everything they can to combat moral corruption. A Muslim cannot stand idle while corruption spreads within the community. This would be either selfishness or helplessness. Muslims are required to take matters into their own hands and change evil directly. If they cannot change it themselves, they must speak up about it. The least they can do is to combat corruption within their hearts, which is the lowest degree of faith. The Prophet says: "The best jihad in the path of Allah is (to speak) a word of justice to an oppressive ruler"⁽³⁾ and "When people see an oppressor but do not prevent him from (doing evil), it is likely that Allah will punish them all."⁽⁴⁾ Life in Islam cannot be separated into a part for Caesar to rule as he pleases and a part for Allah; it is all for Allah. It is every Muslim's right and obligation to direct life to Allah by fighting moral corruption by every means possible. Those who have power can do so directly. Those who do not have power must speak up by offering

(1) Narrated via Tamim Al-Dari by Muslim on faith (55), Ahmed (16940), Abu Dawud on manners (4944) and Al-Nassa'i on pledges of loyalty and allegiance (4197).

(2) Narrated via Hudhayfa by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (7473) and *Al-Ṣaḡhīr* (907) and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (294).

(3) Narrated via Tariq Ibn Shihab by Ahmed (sound; 18828) and Al-Nassa'i on the pledge of loyalty and allegiance (4209).

(4) Narrated via Abu Bakr by Ahmed (sound; 1), Abu Dawud on warfare (4338), and Al-Tirmidhi on social unrest (3057), Ibn Majah also on social unrest (4005), and Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Ṣaḡīḥa* (corrected 1654).

sincere advice, preaching, or reminding people of what is right. If they cannot, they have to at least maintain the lowest degree of faith, which is changing corruption in their hearts.

Fighting moral corruption in one's own heart is not the same as being passive or accepting the status quo, which would be acting like Satan himself. Silence can be quite powerful, because this silence is a form of psychological mobilization that builds up and eventually materializes as actions.

Boycotting The Perpetrators Of Vice

This silence can take the form of boycotting the perpetrators of vice, which is the opposite of what the Israelites did when they maintained their friendships with corrupt people, even though they did not participate in their corrupt acts. Allah has condemned them through the words of David and Jesus: "Cursed were those who disbelieved among the Children of Israel by the tongue of David and of Jesus, the son of Mary. That was because they disobeyed and [habitually] transgressed. They used not to prevent one another from wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing" (Holy Qur'an, 5:78-79) and "And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation. Indeed, you would then be like them. Indeed Allah will gather the hypocrites and disbelievers in Hell all together" (Holy Qur'an, 4:140).

Positive Manifestations Of Muslim Ethics And Behavior

The proactive attitude that underlies Islamic ethics is manifested in many positive behavioral patterns. For example, Muslims are encouraged to build rather than destroy. They are encouraged to remove obstacles from the road, instead of cursing whoever put them there. They are encouraged to light a candle for passers-by, instead of cursing darkness. In fact, Muslims are forbidden from cursing, because it is an unproductive use of energy that leaves people feeling negative. A Muslim man was an alcoholic, who was often caught drunk and punished. One of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions saw him and said: "Curse that man!" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not curse him, for he loves Allah and His Prophet."⁽¹⁾ In another version, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do not support Satan against your brother in faith."⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Al-Bukhari on punishments (6780).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Ahmed (4168) and Al-Hakim on punishments (corrected; 4/382).

In fact, Muslims are categorically forbidden from cursing even animals, natural phenomena, catastrophic events, and even inanimate objects. Below is a list of hadiths that demonstrate how Islam is keen on maintaining a positive attitude toward life:

- “Do not curse the dead, because they have attained that which they had forwarded (i.e., their deeds, good or bad).”⁽¹⁾
- “Do not curse Time, for it is Allah Who is Time.”⁽²⁾
- “Do not curse the wind, for it is from the mercy of Allah, bringing rain or destruction. But ask Allah for its goodness, and seek refuge with Allah from its evil.”⁽³⁾
- “Do not curse fevers, for they remove sins just as a furnace removes impurities.”⁽⁴⁾
- “Do not curse the rooster, for it wakes you up for prayer.”⁽⁵⁾

What is interesting is that Muslims are not allowed even to curse Satan, because doing good deeds and staying away from his way is more productive than cursing him. Abu Al-Malih narrated via his father: “I was riding on a mount behind the Prophet (May Peace be upon Him). It stumbled. Thereupon I said: ‘May the devil perish!’ He said: ‘Do not say that! For if you say it, he will swell so much so that he will be like a house. Say instead: ‘In the name of Allah’, for when you say that, the Devil will diminish so much so that he will be like a fly’.”⁽⁶⁾ Cursing Satan is an unproductive act that pleases Satan, while mentioning Allah is a productive act that displeases Satan.

Living In The Past Is Negative

Another proactive aspect of Islamic ethics is that it does not allow living in the past, whether it was glorious or painful. Living in the past is like being trapped in painful memories. Such memories renew regrets, as one would keep thinking about what could have happened. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Adhere to that which is beneficial for you. Keep asking Allah for help and do not refrain from

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on funerals (1393), Ahmed (25470), and Al-Nassa'i on funerals (1936).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4826), And Muslim on manners (2246).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on manners (2246).

(4) Narrated via Jabir Ibn Abdullah by Muslim on relationships (2575).

(5) Narrated via Zaid Ibn Khalid Al-Jihni by Ahmed (21679), Abu Dawud on manners (5101), Ibn Hibban (5731), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tadhīb* (2797).

(6) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 20591), Abu Dawud on manners (4982), Al-Hakim on manners (corrected; 4/292), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi`* (corrected; 4819).

it. If you are afflicted in any way, do not say: ‘If I had taken this or that step, it would have resulted in such and such’, but say only: ‘Allah so determined and did as He willed’. The word ‘if’ opens the gates of evil thoughts.”⁽¹⁾ Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, do not be like those who disbelieved and said about their brothers when they traveled through the land or went out to fight: ‘If they had been with us, they would not have died or have been killed’; so Allah makes that [misconception] a regret within their hearts. And it is Allah who gives life and causes death, and Allah is Seeing of what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 3:156). In a similar fashion, living in the glory of the past distracts one from being positive and productive. This would be the antithesis of Allah’s words: “There is not for man except that [good] for which he strives” (Holy Qur’an, 53:39). Also, Imam Ali writes:

Be the son of whoever and make your own glory.

Your deeds speak louder than your ancestry.

A real man says: “Here I am” not “here is my father’s story.”

Be Productive As Long As You Can

Moreover, Islamic ethics requires people to continue to be productive as long as they can, even if nobody benefits directly from the results of this productivity. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm cutting in your hands, and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it.”⁽²⁾ But why would the Prophet (PBUH) order the cutting to be planted if nobody would benefit from it if? The answer is simple: Muslims are required to develop Allah’s earth, because such a purpose is valued, both in and of itself.

Believe In Fate Whether It Is Good Or Bad

A firm belief in fate is the underlying motivation for the proactive attitude associated with Islamic ethics. It is a belief that should not be confused with fatalism, which is a passive attitude. It is a belief that empowers people to be proactive. Muslim scholars agree that fatalism is a sign of helplessness. Mohammed Iqbal, a Muslim philosopher from India, writes: “The weak among Muslims use fate as an excuse, but those with strong faith believe that they are themselves Allah’s fate that cannot be defeated or altered.” We can see a good explanation of this statement in the biographies of the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions. One of them was asked by

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on fate (2664), Ahmed (8791), and Ibn Majah in his introduction (79).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (sound, 12981), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (479) and *Al-Diyā’ Al-Mukhtāra* (2715), and Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected, 9).

a leader in the Persian army: “Who are you?” The companion’s answer was: “We are Allah’s fate. He is testing you with us, just like he is testing us with you. If you were a cloud in the sky, we would either rise to face you, or you would come down to us.” Abu Dawud narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) gave a decision between two disputing men. The man who was displeased with the decision turned away and said: “For me Allah suffices, and He is the best dispenser of affairs.” The Prophet said: “Allah blames for falling short, but apply intelligence, and when the matter gets the better of you, say: ‘For me Allah suffices’.”⁽¹⁾ This hadith makes it clear that people should not blame fate for the things they do not like. This is a sign of helplessness and passivity. Rather, people should do due diligence and apply their knowledge as much as they can. If they do everything in their power and they do not prevail, then they can appeal to Allah.

Avoid Dissembling And Controversy

The proactive attitude of Islamic ethics requires Muslims to stay away from wasting their time and energy on futile arguments and controversies, but occupy themselves with productive work instead. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “No people go astray after having followed right guidance, except for those who indulge in disputes”⁽²⁾ and “The most despicable among people in the sight of Allah is the ruthless, argumentative person.”⁽³⁾

Some Sufis’ views on asceticism have gone to extremes, to the point where they depart from the teachings of Islam. They interpret asceticism as rejecting this world, even though it is the pathway to the afterworld. Some Sufis have also interpreted reliance on Allah as rejecting causality and reasoning. Others have been so consumed with their fear of temptation, that they have developed a monastic system similar to that of Christianity. Even the Holy Qur’an says: “Then We sent following their footsteps Our messengers and followed [them] with Jesus, the son of Mary, and gave him the Gospel. And We placed in the hearts of those who followed him compassion and mercy and monasticism, which they innovated; We did not prescribe it for them except [that they did so] seeking the approval of Allah. But they did not observe it with due observance” (Holy Qur’an, 57:27). Some Sufis even went as far as living in isolation for fear of the evil in people. These views are quite far from Islam, as the Prophet (PBUH) encouraged us to work and develop the earth, even if nobody would benefit.

(1) Narrated via Awf Ibn Malik Al-Ashjui by Ahmed (weak, 23983), Abu Dawud on legal judgments (3627).

(2) Narrated via Abu Omama by Ahmed (22164), Al-Tirmidhi in *Al-Tafsir* (3253), Ibn Majah in *Al-Mudaqqima* (48), and Al-Hakim in *Al-Tafsir* (2/447).

(3) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on disputes (2457), Muslim on knowledge (2668), and Ahmed (24343).

Comprehensiveness

While some people might think that religious ethics is limited only to acts of worship, Islamic ethics is comprehensive. While this might be the case in some religions, this claim does not apply to Islam. The Islamic moral system applies to all aspects of life, and it has clear guidelines for every human action, including one's own perception of himself and interactions with others, as summarized below:

Individual Ethics

1. One needs to satisfy his/her physical needs. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Your body has a right on you."⁽¹⁾ Allah says: "Eat and drink, but be not prodigal" (Holy Qur'an, 7:31).
2. People are required to fulfill their intellectual potential. Allah says: "Say, 'Observe what is in heaven and earth'" (Holy Qur'an, 10:101), and "Say, 'I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought'" (Holy Qur'an, 34:46).
3. People are also required to fulfill the motives and drives of their inner selves: "He has succeeded who purifies it, And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Holy Qur'an, 91:9-10) and "And in yourselves. Then will you not see?" (Holy Qur'an, 51:21).
4. People have spiritual needs that need to be fulfilled as well, such as knowing Allah and worshipping Him, for He says: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Holy Qur'an, 51:56).

Social Ethics

1. Islamic ethics lays out social etiquette and manners. For example, Allah says: "Oh you who have believed, do not enter houses other than your own houses until you ascertain welcome and greet their inhabitants" (Holy Qur'an, 24:27), and "Be moderate in your pace and lower your voice" (Holy Qur'an, 31:19).
2. The Holy Qur'an offers moral guidelines on economics and finances: "Woe to those who give less [than due] who, when they take a measure from people, take in full. But if they give by measure or by weight to them, they cause loss" (Holy Qur'an, 83:1-3), and "Fear Allah and give up what remains

(1) Narrated via Amr Ibn Al-As by Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1159), both on fasting.

[due to you] of interest, if you should be believers” (Holy Qur’an, 2:278). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Whoever cheats is not one of us.”⁽¹⁾

3. Islam has clear guidelines regarding policies and governance: “Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice” (Holy Qur’an, 4:58), and “Oh you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger” (Holy Qur’an, 4:95). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Religion is giving sincere advice. His companions asked: ‘To whom, Oh Messenger of Allah?’ He said: ‘To Allah, to His Book, to His Messenger, to the imams of the Muslims and to their common folk.’”⁽²⁾ In summary, Islam does not separate ethics from politics, economics, or manners, as we see in Western perspectives. Islamic ethics is at the core of every human endeavor.

Islamic ethics extends to include non-humans. The Prophet (PBUH) once said: “Fear Allah regarding these animals that cannot speak.”⁽³⁾ The companions asked: “Shall we be rewarded for showing kindness to the animals also?” He said: “A reward is given for every kind act toward every living creature”.⁽⁴⁾ He also said: “Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. Every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably.”⁽⁵⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also said: “A woman went into the fires of hell because of a cat she had tied up, and thus it could not eat, and she did not let it free so that it could devour the vermin of the earth.”⁽⁶⁾

One thing that distinguishes Islamic ethics from many other moral systems is that it applies to the universe as a whole. It is part of Islamic ethics to fulfill one’s duty toward the universe by thinking and learning about it, to appreciate the majesty of its Creator. Allah says: “Indeed, in the creation of heaven and earth, and the alternation of night and day, are signs for those of understanding - Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of heaven and earth, [saying]: ‘Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]’” (Holy Qur’an, 3:190-

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on faith (102), Ahmed (7292), and Abu Dawud on renting (3452).

(2) Narrated via Tamim Al-Dari by Muslim on faith (55), Ahmed (16940), Abu Dawud on manners (4944) and Al-Nassa’i on pledges of loyalty and allegiance (4197).

(3) Narrated via Sahl Ibn Al-Hanzaliya by Abu Dawud on jihad (2548), Ibn Khuzayma on rituals (2545), Al-Nawawi in *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn* (The Gardens of the Righteous), and Al-Albani (corrected, 23).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (2363) and Muslim on peace (2244).

(5) Narrated via Shaddad Ibn Aws by Muslim in his chapter on hunting and slaughtering (1955), Ahmed (17113), Abu Dawud on sacrificed animals (2815).

(6) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (2365) and Muslim (2242).

191), and “We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is, over all things, a Witness?” (Holy Qur’an, 41:53).

The universe is not just a series of natural phenomena; it is the powers of nature that were created for the service of mankind. Allah says: “Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?” (Holy Qur’an, 31:20); “If you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them” (Holy Qur’an, 16:18); and “Oh you who have believed, eat from the good things which We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah if it is [indeed] Him that you worship” (Holy Qur’an, 2:172).

Islamic ethics also includes moral behavior toward Allah who created all things and to whom all praise is due: “[All] praise is [due] to Allah, Lord of the worlds, The Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful, Sovereign of the Day of Recompense. It is You we worship and You we ask for help. Guide us to the straight path” (Holy Qur’an, 1:2-6). Only Allah is worthy of praise, hoping for His mercy, fearing His just judgment, worshipping Him, and seeking His guidance.

Balance Is Essential In Islamic Ethics

The Islamic moral system is built on balance, a balance between many things that might seem contradictory. Is it ethics of love or power, asceticism or pleasure, spirituality or materialism, individualism or collectivism, intellectualism or emotions, or a mixture of all these? In fact, Islamic ethics is all of these things. It involves power, but it is not the brute will to power that Nietzsche called for, and it also involves love, but not the idealistic love of the Bible. Islamic ethics has room for asceticism, but not the excessive asceticism of Stoicism. It also allows for the moderate enjoyment of pleasure, but not in the hedonistic ways of the Cyrenais. Islamic spirituality is far from the idealistic spirituality of the Brahmas, while Islamic realism is nowhere near Marxist materialism. It encourages intellectual pursuits, but it does not believe in the intellectual infallibility of Idealism.

This fascinating balance does not fall under the current categories of modern or ancient philosophies. It can only be categorized as Islamic. Allah says: “Whatever you have been given - it is but [for] enjoyment of the worldly life. But what is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who have believed and upon their Lord rely – And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive, And those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend. And those who, when tyranny strikes them, they defend themselves, And the retribution for an evil act is an evil

one like it, but whoever pardons and makes reconciliation - his reward is [due] from Allah. Indeed, He does not like wrongdoers. And whoever avenges himself after having been wronged - those have not upon them any cause [for blame]. The cause is only against the ones who wrong the people and tyrannize upon the earth without right. Those will have a painful punishment. And whoever is patient and forgives - indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination" (Holy Qur'an, 42:36-43).

These verses show that there is a place for asceticism in Islamic ethics, but it is not asceticism as a lifestyle. In Islam, one can still enjoy the pleasant things in life without getting attached to them. These verses also give us a glimpse of spirituality in Islam. It is a spirituality that is manifested in faith, reliance on Allah, adhering to his commands, and worshipping him alone. They also show that Islamic ethics does not focus on the individual alone, but social ethics is evident in the requirement of spending on charity, offering advice, and seeking consultation. We see power and justice, for the faithful are required to fight against corruption and injustice. But this justice allows for forgiving and responding to evil with good. This is not the meekness of the weak; this is the power to forgive when one can choose to punish.

The Islamic moral system establishes a delicate balance between spirituality and materialism. It does not deprive the body of its needs as in Brahmanism, Stoicism, and Christian monasticism. At the same time, it does not ignore the individual's spiritual needs, as in Judaism or in materialistic philosophies that do not recognize spirituality at all. Anas reported that some of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions were talking about the special acts of worship they intended to perform. One said: "I will abstain and never get married." Another said: "I will fast every day." A third said: "I will pray all night every night." The Prophet (PBUH) commented: "I know more about Allah than all of you. However, I observe prayers and sleep; I observe fast and I break it; I marry women too. He who turns away from my Sunnah, he has no relation with Me."⁽¹⁾

Islamic ethics also balances the focus on this world and the afterlife. While Judaism focuses almost exclusively on the material world and Christianity focuses mostly on the afterlife, Islam balances the two by viewing this world as the gateway to the afterlife. Allah has created mankind to be His successors on earth to develop it and use their good deeds on earth to earn His heaven. Happiness can be achieved both in this world and in the afterlife. Allah says: "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good, and in the Hereafter [that which is] good, and protect us from the punishment of the Fire" (Holy Qur'an, 2:201); and "Seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter; and [yet], do

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (5063) and Muslim (1401), both on marriage.

not forget your share of the world” (Holy Qur’an, 28:77). This balance is also seen in the Prophet’s (PBUH) prayer: “Oh Allah, make my religion easy for me by virtue of which my affairs are protected, set right for me my world where my life exists, make good for me my Hereafter which is my resort to which I have to return.”⁽¹⁾ One of the companions also said: “Work for this world as if you will live forever, and work for your afterlife as if you will die tomorrow.”

There is also the balance between rituals, which is the focus on Judaism, and intentions, which are the focus of Christianity. Islam, in contrast, establishes a balance by making intentions necessary for the validity of rituals and acts of worship: “(The value of) an action depends on the intentions behind it.”⁽²⁾ Thus Islam does not allow people to do evil or ignore their required acts of worship, no matter how good their intentions may be. For example, it is not acceptable for someone to build a mosque using ill-gotten money earned from usury. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah is pure, and He accepts only what is pure”⁽³⁾ and “He who does an act which we have not commanded, will have it rejected (by Allah)”⁽⁴⁾

The Islamic moral system is built on a balance between rights and obligations. This balance does not give people the right to claim unrestricted freedoms to do evil as they please. At the same time, it does not overburden them with obligations that they cannot fulfill. In fact, this balance is based on the covenant that Allah has rights for people to fulfill, and people have rights that Allah fulfills. The Prophet (PBUH) explains these rights when he says: “You know what is the right of Allah upon His servants, and what is the right of His servants upon Him? Allah’s right upon His servants is that they should worship Him alone and associate nothing with Him; and His servants’ right upon Him is that He should not punish those who do not associate a thing with Him.”⁽⁵⁾

Another manifestation of this balance is the middle ground of realism and idealism. Islamic ethics recognizes that human nature urges some people to seek purity but to varying degrees: “Among them are those who wrong themselves, and among them those who are moderate, and among them are those who are foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 32:35), and “And the forerunners, the forerunners - Those are the ones brought near [to Allah]” (Holy Qur’an, 56:10-11).

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on supplications (2720).

(2) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Al-Bukhari on the revelations (1) and Muslim on leadership (1907).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on *Zakat* (1015) and Ahmed (8347).

(4) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on reconciliation (2697) and Muslim on legal judgments (1718), Ahmed (26033), and Abu Dawud on Sunnah (4606).

(5) Narrated via Muadh by Al-Bukhari on monotheism (7373), Muslim on faith (30), and Ahmed (21991).

Allah has willed for Islam to be His comprehensive, global, and final message. It has been sent down to all people, regardless of their race, social classes, or nationality. Islamic ethics brings together what has caused other religious communities and schools of philosophy to splinter, as Islam applies to all people even though they differ greatly in terms of their spiritual and intellectual abilities and in their levels of ambition and desires. While we cannot say that any of these religious or philosophical views are inherently wrong, they all had a particular focus, or they favored some aspects of human nature over others. Balance is what makes Islam stand out, especially as the source of obligation in Islamic ethics is Allah, who created people and knows what works best for them: “Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?” (Holy Qur’an, 67:14).

All people can apply Islamic ethics to satisfy their moderate desires and fulfill their intellectual and spiritual potential. Even those who seek physical pleasure can find it in heaven: “And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes, and you will abide therein eternally” (Holy Qur’an, 43:71); “No soul knows what has been hidden from them for the comfort of their eyes, as reward for what they have done” (Holy Qur’an, 32:17); “For them who have done good is the best [reward] and much more” (Holy Qur’an, 10:26); and “Allah has promised the believing men and women gardens beneath which rivers flow, wherein they shall abide eternally, and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence; but approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the greatest attainment” (Holy Qur’an, 9:72). In the Qudsi hadith Allah says: “I have prepared for My pious servants what no eye has ever seen, what no ear has ever heard, and what no human heart has ever perceived”.⁽¹⁾

While Islamic ethics is designed to apply to all people, it has no place for three categories of people who cannot adhere to it. First, there are those who only believe in instant gratification and hedonistic physical pleasures. Those are the ones who have no interest in the afterlife, as described by Ibrahim Ibn Othman Al-Ghazzi:

The past is dead.

The future is a question mark.

Live in the moment.

The second category includes people who reject all moral responsibility because it might restrict, or infringe upon, their personal interest. These people often claim that ethics is designed and imposed by a particular social class to control other classes. The third category includes those who are fundamentalists, trapped in their ideologies and unable to see beyond them.

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on the creation of the world (3244) and Muslim on Paradise (2824).

Differences Between Islamic Ethics And Philosophical Ethics

Western scholars of moral philosophy note the following differences between philosophical ethics and religious ethics:

Religious ethics, for them, is only concerned with the relationship between the individual and the Divine, and it does not look into other types of human activities. Those other activities are the subject matter of philosophical ethics. This might be true in some religious traditions, but it is definitely not the case in Islam, as we discussed in previous sections. Of course, Islamic ethics is concerned with the relationship between the individual and Allah, but it also focuses on the ethics of social interactions. It also provides detailed guidelines on the moral rights and obligations toward animals, plants, inanimate objects, and even the universe.

The sources of moral obligation vary greatly from one school of philosophy to another. Some argue that the source of moral obligation is the intellect, while others argue that it is the conscience, a moral instinct, socialization, self-preservation, determinism, or pleasure, among others. What they all have in common is that humans are the source of moral obligation. Moral obligation in religious ethics is different because its source is God.

Religious ethics associates ethical behavior, or the lack thereof, with rewards and punishments in this world and beyond (heaven and hell). In other words, the main motive for individuals to adhere to religious ethics is a combination of hope and fear. Philosophical ethics, on the other hand, does not offer reward or punishment. It only offers instant gratification in the form of feeling satisfied for having fulfilled a moral duty. Obviously, this applies only to those who act morally. Many of the philosophers who developed theories of moral obligation did not even believe in God, and therefore, they did not believe in divine reward or punishment.

Professor Mohammed Rashid Rida offers an interesting take on the differences between philosophical and religious approaches to ethics. He writes: "The wisdom of philosophers is inherently incomplete and prone to error, because it is human knowledge. It is limited, because humans have no direct access to divinity. For philosophers, God is a theoretical unknown. Moreover, these philosophies are accessible to a handful of people who are educated enough to understand and appreciate them. Besides, not everyone who has access to them is likely to accept or believe them. After all, people believe only what serves their purposes. Unlike religious ethics, philosophical ethics have no power to enforce moral obligation. People, by their very nature, tend to reject submitting to others, even if those others are wiser and more informed. Rather, people are more likely to follow a higher power, which they believe to reward and punish them."

Here is a case in point: Avicenna the philosopher had an educated servant. This servant was in awe of Avicenna's intellect and knowledge, and he quite often asked the philosopher why a philosopher would believe in Islam even though he was more educated than the Prophet (PBUH). Avicenna always rebuked him for such comments. One cold snowy night, they happened to be in Isfahan. Avicenna woke his servant up shortly before dawn and ordered him to fetch water for his ablution. The servant apologized and excused himself because it was too cold. Avicenna woke up him again for the Morning Prayer and asked for water, but the servant, again, did not comply because of the cold. When the call to prayer was over, Avicenna rebuked his servant: "Did you hear this? The call says, 'Proclaim that Mohammed is Allah's Prophet'. You are my servant, and your job is to serve me. You are so impressed by me that you favor me over the Prophet. However, you disobey me and use the cold as an excuse." The Persian man wakes up well before dawn, goes to the mosque, and climbs the minaret, which is the coldest place in town, just to wait for dawn. When he sees the first ray of light, he calls upon people to pray and fills the town with the Prophet's (PBUH) name. This is here in Isfahan, and the prophet lived in Mecca four centuries ago. It is faith that makes people heed the call to worship. Think about that, and see the difference between the power of faith and the power of science and philosophy.

One of the main advantages of religious ethics over philosophical ethics is that faithful people from all walks of life can adhere to religious ethics motivated only by their firm faith. As long as people understand their faith correctly, their morality is on solid ground. This is why human knowledge, whether it is science or philosophy, is of no use if religion is misunderstood and faith is lost. We can see this ourselves in our modern times in those communities where people have the most advanced knowledge, but they follow no moral authority, whether it is a king, prince, scholar, or philosopher. They only follow their desires and live in moral chaos.⁽¹⁾

Islamic ethics, in particular, is quite distinct from philosophical ethics. Below is a summary of the main differences:

1. Islamic ethics has a much wider scope than philosophical ethics. Islamic ethics includes the relationship between the individual and Allah and relationships among people. It combines moral acts in this world and life in the hereafter. Most moral philosophies have nothing to do with faith or God.
2. Islamic ethics appreciates humanity more than most philosophies. Islamic ethics sees mankind as a species with such a special status that the rest of creation is there to serve them. This status is attributed to their being

(1) *Al-Wahy Al-Muhammadi* (The Revelations of Mohammed), Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, 2005, 34-35.

endowed with intellect and spirituality. Moreover, Islamic ethics recognizes a unique function for mankind, namely moral responsibility; people are rewarded or punished in this world and in the afterlife for their actions. This is very different from moral philosophies that view mankind as a spec in a mysterious universe that came about by a mere coincidence.

3. The spiritual charge generated by faith is a more powerful motive than what moral philosophies offer. Faith resolves many of the issues that moral philosophies fail to address, such as the moral person who receives nothing in return but oppression and persecution in this world, or the martyr who dies for a good cause without receiving justice on earth.
4. Islamic ethics can reach a much wider base than moral philosophies, because it is simple and straightforward. While very few people can understand Aristotle's philosophical arguments for moderation, everyone can understand Allah's words: "Do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent" (Holy Qur'an, 17:29). While most people cannot understand Kant's determinism, everyone understands: "And they give food in spite of love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive, [Saying], 'We feed you only for the countenance of Allah. We wish not from you reward or gratitude'" (Holy Qur'an, 76:8-9).
5. The detailed moral guidelines offered by Islam constitute a comprehensive moral program that deals with all aspects of everyday life in addition to general moral principles. Moral philosophies, in contrast, offer only general principles. Religions in general, and Islam in particular, focus on practical ethics, such as the applications of moral values (e.g., justice, truthfulness, honesty, patience, gratitude, love, self-denial, and others) because they are more important for daily life than theoretical ethics.
6. Most people are not interested in theories, but they are easily touched when they see their applications exemplified by living role models.
7. Islamic ethics is available to all, regardless of social class, wealth, power, or virtue. No matter how much of a sinner a person may be, the door is always open. Allah's forgiveness is greater than any sin: "Say, 'Oh My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:53). Allah describes His faithful servants as: "Those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection,

and he will abide therein humiliated - Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 25:68-70). Sinners are still members of the Muslim Ummah, and they cannot be denied the right to Islamic ethics: “Then we caused to inherit the Book those We have chosen of Our servants; and among them is he who wrongs himself, and among them is he who is moderate, and among them is he who is foremost in good deeds by permission of Allah. That [inheritance] is what is the great bounty” (Holy Qur’an, 35:32). Even those who wrong themselves by committing sin and fail to fulfill their duties are still part and parcel of the Ummah side by side with those who are “foremost in good deeds”.

2.6 Standards Of Ethical Judgments In Islam

One might think that the only standard for moral judgment in Islam is the revelation. One might even think that Islamic ethics has no room for intellectual pursuits, cultural traditions, individual and social wellbeing, or other standards of moral judgment. Some Sunnah scholars have promoted such inaccurate views, while others have gone so far as to claim that “moral and immoral behavior is what the Sunnah considers as such”. Some even reject any views that treat human intellect as a standard for moral judgment as heretic Motalizite views. These claims are false. In this section, I will discuss the standards for moral judgment in Islamic ethics.

The Revelation As A Source Of Moral Judgment

The revelation is Allah’s word, and it is the first standard for moral judgment. It determines what is good and what is evil when it comes to articles of faith, acts of worship, and social interactions. This revelation is the message Allah has sent to people via His messengers to inform people about what to do and what not to do. Thus, good behavior is what Allah determines to be as good for us. Allah, who created everything, knows our nature and the consequences of our actions. At the same time, He is the Most Merciful, and He only wants the best for us: “Allah wants to make clear to you [the lawful from the unlawful] and guide you to the [good] practices of those before you and to accept your repentance. And Allah is Knowing and Wise. Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow [their] desires want you to digress [into] a great deviation. And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak” (Holy Qur’an, 4:26-28). Allah says: “Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship” (Holy Qur’an, 2:185), and “Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful” (Holy Qur’an, 5:6). Allah wants for his servants all that is good, pure, and feasible, not evil, harm, or hard. He is indeed the Most Merciful.

Human intellect cannot determine what is good and what is not in all circumstances, especially in cases of conflict of interests, or when one has to choose between two evils. There are many examples of moral dilemmas, such as deciding whether to tell the truth to someone who would intentionally hurt, or even kill, an innocent person. If an innocent person hides from someone trying to hurt him, would it be immoral to tell a lie to the perpetrator? What about telling lies to the enemies during war time? Would it be immoral for a prisoner of war to tell lies when interrogated by his captors? What about telling lies to help a disputing couple to reconcile?

The Shari’a has clear guidelines on cases of that nature. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A liar is not one who tries to bring reconciliation amongst people and speaks

good (in order to avert dispute), or he conveys good.” Ibn Shihab says that he did not hear of exemptions for telling lies except for three cases: in times of war, bringing reconciliation among people, and between a married couple.”⁽¹⁾

It is revelation that determines what is moral, and what is not, and to what degree. Only revelation can command or encourage people to act in certain ways or to refrain from certain actions. Human intellect and conscience cannot reliably make moral judgments. The revelation speaks of good acts that people are required to do and others that they should do without direct obligation. It also makes promises of reward for those who comply and warnings of punishment for those who do not. While both kinds of acts are moral, they are not of the same status. Some such acts are obligatory pillars of Islam, such as praying, fasting, giving to *Zakat*, and going to the *Hajj*, while others are highly recommended without direct obligation.

The Conscience (Or Heart) As A Source Of Moral Obligation

Islamic ethics has every individual serving as a personal mufti, as people can consult their hearts on matters of moral judgments. This applies only in cases where there is no text in the Holy Qur'an or the verified Sunnah that makes a clear moral judgment. One cannot consult his/her heart in matters where the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah makes an explicit moral judgment. Otherwise, people would defy Allah's judgments as they please. Allah says: “And recite, [Oh Mohammed], what has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord. There is no changing of His words, and never will you find in other than Him a refuge” (Holy Qur'an, 18:27); and “The word of your Lord has been fulfilled in truth and in justice. No one can alter His words, and He is the Hearing, the Knowing” (Holy Qur'an, 6:115).

The judgment calls one's heart makes can be more accurate than the judgments of some jurisprudence experts, who might not know what works best for every particular individual. Imam Ahmed narrates that Abu Thalaba Al-Khushni asked the Prophet (PBUH) about what is permissible and what forbidden. The Prophet (PBUH) looked at him for a while, then answered, “Ask your heart. Piety is that which contents the soul and comforts the heart. Sin is what causes doubts and perturbs the heart, even if people pronounce it lawful and give you verdicts on such matters again and again.”⁽²⁾ This applies only to those with sound hearts and instincts that have not been corrupted with desire and greed. This is why the Prophet (PBUH) did not answer Abu Thalaba directly, but looked into his heart

(1) Narrated via Ibn Shihab by Al-Bukhari on reconciliation (2692) and Muslim on family relations (2605). Al-Bukhari does not include the part of Ibn Shihab.

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 17742), Al-Tabarani (22/319), and Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Tarhib wal-Tarhib* (2684).

first. The Prophet (PBUH) was one of those who can look into people's hearts: "Indeed in that are signs for those who discern" (Holy Qur'an, 15:75). Al-Munawi comments on this hadith: "Allah has created people with a moral compass that guides them to the truth. This is why the truth comforts their hearts." This accurate moral compass is in every heart that is free from hypocrisy, pride, envy, and the evils of desire.

Al-Munawi continues: "The truth is a form of light, and faithful hearts are full of light. When the truth touches the heart, the two lights merge causing the heart to feel at peace, but if the darkness of falsehood comes to the heart, the heart rejects it and feels disturbed... These are the hearts that have rejected earthly desires and emerged from the darkness into the light. The hearts that are not purified are covered with the veils of desire, and as such they prefer sin and ignorance. The inner moral compass is for those souls that have accepted to submit and were trained to the point where they are filled with the lights of the truth."⁽¹⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) says: "The essence of virtue is good morals. Sinful conduct is what turns in your heart (making you feel uncomfortable) and you would not like others to know about it."⁽²⁾ Scholars have interpreted this hadith as referring to a kind of disliking that is different from normal discomfort, such as that experienced when one is seen eating in public. This hadith is about a disliking based on faith. They also interpreted "others" as those with high morals; people who would cause embarrassment if they were seen to be acting poorly. This embarrassment is a sign that a sin was committed."⁽³⁾

Islamic Ethics Are Considerate To Public Interest

One of the hallmarks of moral judgment in Islam is that it protects people's best interests. If a particular behavior would benefit people, it is considered moral, and vice versa, in a gradient fashion. Allah says: "They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, 'In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:219). This is a clear example of the motivation behind moral judgments in Islam. To deal with cases of moral judgment in the absence of explicit texts, scholars of jurisprudence have developed the principle of "Do no harm", which is derived from the hadith: "There should be neither harming nor reciprocating harm". Several jurisprudence rules are based on this principle, including (a) harm has to be removed, but it cannot be removed in a way that causes more harm, (b) individual harm is acceptable only if it pre-

(1) *Fayḍ Al-Qadīr* (3/218).

(2) Narrated via Al-Nawwas Ibn Saman by Muslim on family ties (2553), Ahmed (17631), and Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (2389).

(3) *Fayḍ Al-Qadīr* (3/218).

vents a public harm, (c) minor harm can be inflicted if it prevents a more serious harm, (d) preventing harm has priority over bringing benefits, (e) lesser benefits can be ignored to bring more significant benefits, and (f) long term benefits take priority over temporary benefits. These rules apply to all moral judgments in Islam in those cases where the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah do not make an explicit judgment. Note that jurisprudence scholars developed these rules centuries before Putnam's theory of moral realism.

Islamic Ethics Are Considerate To Good Customs

Customs have their place in Islamic ethics, but only if these customs comply with Islamic Shari'a. If the Muslim community reaches a consensus that a particular act is morally acceptable, then this act is considered moral, for the Ummah cannot have a consensus to accept morally questionable behavior. Abdullah Ibn Masoud, who is one of the Prophet's companions, says: "What the Muslim community agrees to see as good, Allah also sees as good, and what they agree to see as evil, Allah also sees it as evil."⁽¹⁾ This statement echoes the Prophet's hadith: "My Ummah does not agree on a falsehood."⁽²⁾ Thus, social consensus is a criterion for moral judgment in the absence of an explicit text in the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah. Note that consensus here does not mean the consensus of the uneducated or the consensus of a particular social class or group. Consensus here means the consensus of scholars who are known for their knowledge, laudable ethics, love for what is good for Muslims, and more importantly for their fear of Allah. Even if the majority of the community veer off the right path and religious ethics, there will always be a small minority that would hold true to the truth. This minority cannot give in or jump on the bandwagon. They have the responsibility to speak up and steer the community back to the truth. This is why Ibn Masoud says: "The community is all of those who agree on the truth, even if it was a single individual."⁽³⁾

Customs play an additional role when applying the Shari'a, especially in cases that have to do with socially accepted norms, such as alimony and living standards for married women. For example, social norms help define "kindness" in "Live with them [your wives] in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike a thing and Allah makes therein much good" (Holy Qur'an, 4:19); and "acceptable terms" in: "When you divorce women and they have [nearly] fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or release them according to acceptable

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (sound; 3600), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Kabir* (9/112) and in *Al-Awsat* (3602), Al-Hakim on the companion's knowledge (corrected; 3/78-79), and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawaid* (1/428).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Ibn Abi Shayba on social strife (38347) and Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar in *Talkhis Al-Hubayr* (sound; 3/301).

(3) Narrated by Al-Lalikai' on the foundations of Sunnah and Ummah beliefs (106).

terms” (Holy Qur’an, 2:231). Scholars of jurisprudence have developed a rule to accept cultural traditions as criteria for moral judgment, as Ibn Abdine⁽¹⁾ writes:

Traditions have a role in jurisprudence.

You may judge accordingly with prudence.

Effects Of Knowledge On Moral Behavior

The Prophet (PBUH) states that knowledge has a positive impact on acting morally and staying away from immoral acts: “This world is only for four kinds of people. The first is someone whom Allah provides with wealth and knowledge. He remembers his Lord when using them, nurtures the kinship ties with them, and knows that Allah has a right in them. This is the most virtuous rank. The second is someone whom Allah provides with knowledge, but not wealth. He has a truthful intent, saying: ‘If I had wealth, I would do the deeds of so-and-so with it’. He has his intention and the same rewards as the first. The third is someone whom Allah provides with wealth, but not knowledge. He spends his wealth foolishly and does not remember his Lord when spending it, nor nurtures his kinship ties or recognizes Allah’s right in it. This is the most despicable rank. The fourth is someone whom Allah does not provide with wealth or knowledge, but he says: ‘If I had wealth or knowledge, I would do the deeds of so-and-so’. He has his intention and the same sin.”⁽²⁾

The Holy Qur’an also establishes the connection between knowledge and ethics, for knowledge leads to faith, and faith purifies the heart. Allah says: “Those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it” (Holy Qur’an, 22:54). The Holy Qur’an also tells us about those in hell who admit that it was their ignorance that led them to this end: “They will say: ‘If only we had been listening or reasoning, we would not be among the companions of Hell’” (Holy Qur’an, 67:10). There are many verses in the Holy Qur’an that describe people with poor morality as ignorant: “And [recall] when Moses said to his people: ‘Indeed, Allah commands you to slaughter a cow’. They said: ‘Do you take us in ridicule?’ He said: ‘I seek refuge in Allah from being among the ignorant’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:67). We also see this association in the story of Joseph when the King’s wife and her friends wanted to seduce him: “He [Joseph] said: ‘My Lord, prison is more to my liking than what they invite me to. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant’” (Holy Qur’an, 12:33). Allah

(1) See *Nashr Al-‘Arf fi Binā’ Ba’d Al-Aḥkām ‘ala Al-‘Urf* by Ibn Abdine, in *Majmū’ at Rasā’il Ibn Abdine*, 2/112.

(2) Narrated via Abu Kabsha Al-Anmari by Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (sound; 2325) and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi’* (corrected; 5335).

also says: “Take [Oh Mohammed] what is given easily⁽¹⁾, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant” (Holy Qur’an, 7:199). Allah describes His faithful servants in “The servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth easily, and when the ignorant address them [harshly], they say [words of] peace” (Holy Qur’an, 25:63). Those faithful servants act peacefully toward the ignorant and refrain from responding to harsh words with the same. Allah praises those who “when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say: ‘For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant’” (Holy Qur’an, 28:55).

Committing sin is considered a form of ignorance. Allah says: “The repentance accepted by Allah is only for those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness] and then repent soon after. It is those to whom Allah will turn in forgiveness, and Allah is ever Knowing and Wise” (Holy Qur’an, 4:17); and “When those come to you who believe in Our verses, say, ‘Peace be upon you. Your Lord has decreed upon Himself mercy: that any of you who does wrong out of ignorance and then repents after that and corrects himself - indeed, He is Forgiving and Merciful’” (Holy Qur’an, 6:54). Several scholars agree that this latest verse means that anyone who disobeys Allah is ignorant.⁽²⁾

When the King’s wife and her friends saw prophet Joseph (PBUH) in her palace, they began to cut their palms while saying: “Good gracious! This is not a mortal being! This is but a noble angel” (Holy Qur’an, 12:31). She declared to them that she loved Joseph and was determined to force him to change his refusal into approval, but Joseph (PBUH) said: “My Lord, prison is more to my liking than that which they invite me to. And if You do not avert from me their plan, I might incline toward them and [thus] be of the ignorant” (Holy Qur’an, 12:33).

The Status Of Moral Acts: Inward Not Outward And Quality Not Quantity

The status of moral acts in Islam has nothing to do with how they appear, but it has everything to do with the intentions and motives behind them, as well as the values they reflect. A Good deed might look insignificant, but it might lead to heaven. A bad deed might look like a trifle, but it can lead to hell. Imam Ahmed narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “A man went to heaven because of flies, and another went to hell because of flies.” His companions asked for an explanation. He said: “Two men passed by a group of people who were worshipping an

(1) Al-Jasas explains in *Aḥkām Al-Qur’ān* (3/194) that “what is easy” in this contexts refers to accepting moral acts that do not cause hardship and not expecting ones do.

(2) Narrated via Al-Suddi, Mujahid, and Ibn Zaid by Al-Tabari in his exegesis of the Holy Qur’an (6/508).

idol. They said nobody could pass by the idol without making an offering. They asked one of the men to make an offering, but he had nothing to offer. They told him to make an offering even if it was some flies. He did make an offering of flies. They let him go, but he went to hell for it. Then they ordered the other man to make an offering. He said: "I would not make an offering to anyone except for Allah." They killed the man, and he went to heaven for it."⁽¹⁾

This hadith is quite telling. One might think that it is just a simple issue about flies, but it is a symbolic narrative that describes two kinds of people. The first includes people who are willing to give up their faith to appease those in power, to maneuver one's way out of trouble, or to make some material gain. The people in this group are like the man who made the offering to the idol and deserved hell for it. It does not matter whether his offering was a fly or a cow. It is not an issue of quantity, but it is an issue of giving up one's faith. The other kind of people are those who would not negotiate their faith under any circumstances, no matter what the consequences may be. This is the parable of the man who was murdered because he refused to make an offering of flies to a false god, and he went to heaven for it.

In others hadiths, the Prophet (PBUH) tells of a woman who went to hell because of a cat she tied up⁽²⁾ and a prostitute who went to heaven because she gave a dog some water to drink.⁽³⁾ Why should the first woman deserve hell, but the second be forgiven, even though her profession is deeply rooted in sin? The first woman's act came out of a hardened heart that had no mercy on the cat. This heart can be purified only with fire. The other woman's heart was full of light and mercy. She felt the pains of the dog and acted kindly toward it. Maybe poverty pushed her into sinful acts, but Allah is merciful toward those who show mercy toward His creatures.

We might even see different instances of the same type of action, but their truths vary from one person to the other. People travel all the time, but some might intend their travels to be an act in Allah's name and be rewarded for it, while others might make the same journey for different purposes. Allah says: "And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on Earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 4:100). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "[The value of] an action depends on the inten-

(1) Narrated via Tariq Ibn Shihab by Ahmed on asceticism (84) and Ibn Abi Shayba on the biographies of the companions (33709).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari (2365) and Muslim (2242).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on stories of the prophets (3467) and Muslim on peace (2245).

tions behind it. A man will be rewarded only for what he intended. The emigration of one who emigrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger is for the sake of Allah and His Messenger, and the emigration of one who emigrates for gaining a worldly advantage or for marrying a woman is for what he has emigrated.”⁽¹⁾ Scholars of Sunnah argue that his hadith is about one of the companions who emigrated from Mecca to Medina to marry a woman he was in love with. While his objective is valid in its own right, it is not the same as migrating in Allah’s cause.⁽²⁾

Moral acts are not valued by their quantity, but only by their quality. The Prophet (PBUH) once said: “A dirham has surpassed 100,000 dirhams.” His companions asked: “How can that be?” He said: “A man of substantial wealth gave 100,000 dirhams to *Zakat*, and another had only two dirhams and gave one to *Zakat*.”⁽³⁾ A single dirham from someone who has only two is far more valuable than 100,000 dirhams from someone who has millions.

(1) See *Al-Niyya wal-Ikhlāṣ* (Intentions and Sincerity) by Al-Qaradawi. The hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelation (1) and Muslim on leadership (1907).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Tabarani (9/103), Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Fawā'id* (2580), and Ibn Hajar in *Fath Al-Bāri* (1/10).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Nassa'i (2527), Ibn Khuzaymah (2443), Ibn Hibban (3347), Al-Hakim (1/416), all on *Zakat*, and Al-Albani in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (corrected; 883).

2.7 Review Of Khalid Mohammed Khalid's Book "*Either This Or The Flood*" And His Thesis On Secular Ethics

In this section, I review Sheikh Khalid Mohammed Khalid's book *Either This or the Flood*, in which he argues that secular ethics is more effective than religious ethics. Before we get into this discussion, it is important to note that Sheikh Khalid's books were meant to counter the tide of political Islam and the teachings of the Muslim Brotherhood, which were promoted in the writings of Hassan Al-Banna, Mohammed Al-Ghazali, Abdul Aziz Kamil, Sayyid Sabiq, Al-Bahi Al-Khouli, Abdul Qadir Ouda, Fathi Othman, and others. Sheikh Khalid's main objective was to offer a "progressive" alternative to the rise of Islamist views that see Islam as faith and nation state, revolution and civilization, and ethics, not just a religion for this world and the hereafter. Sheikh Khalid's first book *From Here We Start* received a warm welcome from all the anti-Islam forces, including atheist, Crusader, and Zionist forces. The late Sheikh Mohammed Al-Ghazali responded effectively to this book. Sheikh Al-Ghazali was a scholar who rejected despotism, called for freedom and social justice, and the author of many books that have served as landmarks in modern Islamic thought, such as *Al-Islām wal-Awḍā' Al-Iqtisādiyya* (*Islam and Economics*), *Al-Islam wal-Manāhij Al-Ishtirākiyya* (*Islam and Socialist Systems*), and *Al-Islām Al-Muftarā 'Alayhi bayna Al-Shiyū'īyyīn wal-Ra'smāliyyīn* (*Attacks on Islam by Communists and Capitalists*).

In *This or the Flood*, Sheikh Khalid starts his chapter on religious ethics with the following excerpt, which I have been told was omitted from subsequent editions: "In my book *From Here We Start*, I discuss the concepts of religious nationalism and religious nation states, both of which I argued be unfeasible, if not impossible. In my later book *Democracy Forever*, I dedicated the chapter entitled "Legislative Democracy" to the possibility of establishing legal rulings based on religion. I concluded that we can have religious laws only as far as we can have "religious electricity" and "religious transportation," i.e., it is simply impossible. In this book, I discuss the concept of "religious ethics". I will attempt to address the following questions: (a) What is religious ethics? (b) Has religious ethics achieved its historic purpose? and (c) Is there still a role for religious ethics in a modern society?

I can already hear the objections of some readers and some questions, especially: What is left in religion if you deny the possibility of a religious state, laws, and now ethics? I have to admit that it is a fair question. In the end, it is our duty to pursue the truth without fear of the consequences."⁽¹⁾

(1) Khalid Mohammed Khalid, *Hādhā aw Al-Ṭūfān* (This or the Flood), 1st edition: 168.

Before I present Sheikh Khalid's responses to these questions, I would like to explain some of the background to his argument. Sheikh Khalid had already published another book in which he apologized and retracted some of the claims he made in his chapter on religious nationalism in *From Here We Start*. This apology came as a response to several publications criticizing his work, especially Sheikh Al-Ghazali's book *From Here We Learn* and Dr. Farid Wajdi in various articles in *Al-Azhar* magazine, including an article entitled *We Do Not Start from Here*. In his apology, Sheikh Khalid explained the historical context that led him to these conclusions, while revisiting many of his arguments about Islamic justice and politics. However, he did not change his stance on religious laws and ethics. In fact, he unapologetically continued to write against Islamists and their interpretations of Islam, and he never published new editions that corrected his previous claims.

I met Sheikh Khalid in person only once at Sheikh Al-Baqouri's house. Sheikh Al-Baqouri fell out of then President Nasser's favor, and a group of scholars met in his house to discuss the situation. At that time I had just been released from a military prison, and had started a short-lived career in the Ministry of Charitable Endowments, away from preaching and teaching. I was later transferred to Al-Azhar, then I moved to Qatar. This is why very few people at Sheikh Al-Baqouri's meeting knew me. One of those present was speaking eloquently on some important issues, but I had no idea who he was. When we left Sheikh Al-Baqouri's house, we asked who that person was, and we were told that he was Sheikh Khalid. This is all the personal contact I have had with Sheikh Khalid, and I never had the opportunity to meet with him again. Many years later, I was contacted by his office and informed of his change of heart regarding his book *From Here We Start* and his return to mainstream Islamic scholarship. It was also an invitation to collaborate with his office on a new academic center. My response was quite short: I would wait to see the activities of the new center, and I have always been glad to contribute to activities that support Islam and Muslims.

While Sheikh Al-Ghazali was friends with Sheikh Khalid, this friendship did not stop Sheikh Al-Ghazali from publishing *From Here We Learn*, which is quite critical of Sheikh Khalid's arguments. In this book, Al-Ghazali writes: "The Islamist groups were unfair to Sheikh Khalid, and they let him down when he needed them most. This is why he left them and sought support elsewhere. However, Sheikh Khalid was never a sell-out, whether he was a leader or a follower." I wish that Sheikh Khalid had worked within the same framework as Sheikh Al-Ghazali, and had joined his sincere efforts to serve Islam, the Shari'a, and the Ummah. If the two of them had collaborated, they would have formed a formidable front in the face of anti-Islam forces. However, it was not meant to be, and Allah only knows what people's intentions are. While I disagree with some of Sheikh Khalid's

arguments, I have always seen him as someone who strives to achieve the best for Muslims, even though I think he went too far away from the mainstream.

Sheikh Khalid's Views On The Characteristics Of Ethics

Sheikh Khalid stripped Islam of its powers, clipped its wings, and left it unable to fend for itself. He took away from Islam its ability to establish a nation state with a government that rules according to Allah's word, even though Allah has only offered people justice and the truth: "It is Allah who has sent down the Book in truth and [also] the balance" (Holy Qur'an, 42:17); and "We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice" (Holy Qur'an, 57:25). Sheikh Khalid prefers to see a nationalist government rather than an Islamic one.⁽¹⁾ Sheikh Khalid claims that Islam should not be the source of legislation on individual, family, social, criminal, financial, constitutional, or state affairs. He rejects what he calls "theocratic laws", even though they are the foundations of Islamic Shari'a and jurisprudence. He later changed his position and apologized, which is quite commendable. However, I wish he had changed his views on some of his other claims as well.

While Sheikh Khalid quotes many Qur'anic verses, hadiths, examples from the biographies of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions, and the cannons of Islamic scholarship, he does not consider any of these to be a valid source of ethics. For Sheikh Khalid, religious ethics is absolute, a form of fascism, in the sense that nobody has the right to question any of its principles or orders. He also argues that religious ethics is not concerned with individuals or human nature. More importantly, he sees it as impossible to enforce this type of ethics. To him, nobody has the right to impose Islamic ethics unless there is an explicit text in the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah that makes it obligatory: "The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say: 'We hear and we obey'. And those are the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 24:51). He writes: "Religious ethics criminalizes and prohibits types of behavior. It forbids as it pleases and imposes harsh penalties on those who do not comply."⁽²⁾

These claims choose to ignore some of the most basic principles of Islam. Islamic scholars from all schools of thought agree that only Allah has the right to determine what is forbidden and what is permissible: "Say, 'Have you seen what Allah has sent down to you of provision of which you have made [some] lawful and [some] unlawful?' Say, 'Has Allah permitted you [to do so], or do you

(1) See Sheikh Al-Ghazali's criticism of this argument.

(2) Ibid.

invent [something] about Allah?’” (Holy Qur’an, 10:59). The Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah offer ample evidence that nobody has the right to forbid what Allah has made permissible or allow what He has forbidden. Only Allah has that right.

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “What is permissible is clear and what is forbidden is clear. Certain things are doubtful, and many people do not know about them. He who guards against doubtful things keeps his religion and his honor unblemished. But he who falls into doubtful things falls into sin, just like a shepherd who grazes his cattle in the vicinity of a pasture declared prohibited; he is likely to stray into the pasture. Every king has protected areas and Allah’s is that which He has declared forbidden. There is a piece of flesh in the body. If it is healthy, the whole body is healthy, and if it is corrupt, the whole body is corrupt. It is the heart.”⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also says: “What Allah has made permissible in His Book is permissible, and what He has forbidden is forbidden. If He says nothing about something, He does so out of his mercy and forgiveness. Accept His mercy, and remember that Allah never forgets anything: ‘And never is your Lord forgetful’” (Holy Qur’an, 19:64).⁽²⁾

No Muslim has the right to make anything forbidden or unlawful unless Allah says it is. In fact, Muslims have the right and the obligation to respond to such false claims, regardless of the social, political, or religious power of whoever makes them. This is where the People of Books have gone wrong: “They have taken their scholars and monks as lords besides Allah, and [also] the Messiah, the son of Mary. And they were not commanded except to worship one God; there is no deity except Him. Exalted is He above whatever they associate with Him” (Holy Qur’an, 9:31). Islam does not make things forbidden to cause people hardship or to make their lives unpleasant. Even those who make mistakes are always welcome to repent. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “By God, the One in Whose Hand my soul is, were you not to commit sins, Allah would replace you with a people who would commit sins and then seek His forgiveness, and He would forgive them.”⁽³⁾

The religious ethics that Sheikh Khalid rejects is unambiguously stated in the Holy Qur’an. This is the main function of the Holy Qur’an: “This [Holy Qur’an] is a clear statement to [all] the people and a guidance and instruction for those conscious of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 3:138); “The Holy Qur’an, a guidance for the people and clear proof of guidance and criterion” (Holy Qur’an, 2:185); and “Indeed, those who conceal what We sent down of clear proofs and guidance after We made it clear for the people in the Scripture - those are cursed by Allah and

(1) Narrated via Al-Numan Ibn Bashir by Al-Bukhari on faith (4087) and Muslim (1599).

(2) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda by Al-Bazzar (4087), Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Kubrā* (10/12), Al-Haythami in *Al-Majma’* (1/416), and Al-Hakim in his *Tafsīr* (2/375).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on repentance (2749) and Ahmed (8082).

cursed by those who curse” (Holy Qur’an, 2:159). There are numerous verses in the Holy Qur’an that reiterate this idea. The Prophet (PBUH) was entrusted to explain Allah’s word to the people: “And We revealed to you [Oh Mohammed] the message that you may make clear to the people that was sent down to them and that they might give thought” (Holy Qur’an, 16:44). Thus, the Holy Qur’an is a divine message addressed to all people, and the Sunnah offers all necessary clarification. This is why Imam Al-Shatbi considers efforts to preserve the Sunnah as efforts to preserve the Holy Qur’an.

Islam calls on people to abide by the moral values in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah, such as honesty, truthfulness, justice, virtue, courage, generosity, and many others. Nevertheless, Sheikh Khalid claims that these are all human values, not religious values. In response, I assert that these values are human in the sense that people need them. I believe that Islamic ethics applies to humanity as a whole, and only with this ethics can individuals, families, communities, and nation states achieve justice. It is this ethics that regulates freedom, keeps desire to moderation, releases the powers of good, restrains the powers of evil, and encourages everyone to collaborate in the cause of justice.

Why would Sheikh Khalid take such a position toward Islamic ethics and even call it the reason why the Muslim Ummah has stagnated? Why would he call it religious ethics instead of its true name, Islamic ethics? Why would he strip Islamic ethics from everything that would make it useful and effective? Why would he depict all the poor moral qualities that have become widespread in Muslim societies as religious ethics? All scholars of Islam denounce these poor moral qualities and emphasize that they have nothing to do with Islam. Sheikh Khalid’s claims raise many questions about his intentions and motives. He even tries to establish a new rule that allows replacing the moral teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah. His argument is based on the issue of abrogation, which involves legal rules in the Holy Qur’an that were abolished during the Prophet’s (PBUH) life. This is quite an outdated argument and it has been the subject of so much debate that it is now fully settled. Only doubters dig up this argument to serve their purposes, such as those who claim that the “Verse of the Sword” replaced 140 verses, or even 200 in some accounts. However, none of those doubters can identify that “Verse of the Sword”, and each gives different unsubstantiated claims about many verses. The reader might be interested in reading *Fiqh Al-Jihād (The Jurisprudence of Jihad)*⁽¹⁾ to see a comprehensive refutation of these claims.

I very much doubt that Sheikh Khalid actually believes this argument. If he does, there is plenty of evidence against it, especially in the books of Ibn Hazm,

(1) *Fiqh Al-Jihād (The Jurisprudence of Jihad)*, 3rd edition, By Yusuf Al-Qaradawi. Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, (1/285-333).

Ibn Al-Qayyim, and Al-Shatbi. In fact, every scholar of the Holy Qur'an knows that any ruling stated in the text cannot be altered. The only case of what might look like abrogation is the verse on fasting, which was revealed early on when fasting was first instated: "Oh you who have believed, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you that you may become righteous - [Fasting for] a limited number of days. So whoever among you is ill or on a journey [during them] - then an equal number of days [are to be made up]. And upon those who are able [to fast, but with hardship] - a ransom [as substitute] of feeding a poor person [each day]. And whoever volunteers excess - it is better for him. But to fast is best for you, if you only knew" (Holy Qur'an, 2: 83-84). Both Al-Bukhari and Muslim state that the Prophet's (PBUH) companions considered the first verse to be cancelled by the second one. This is possible in the sense that the rules of Islam were revealed in stages, but there has never been a consensus on this particular case.

Sheikh Khalid also claims that secular ethics is more effective than religious ethics. Specifically, he does not consider truthfulness as a religious or Islamic virtue, even though it is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Allah says: "Oh you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are true" (Holy Qur'an, 9:119); and "Among the believers are men true to what they promised Allah. Among them is he who has fulfilled his vow [to the death], and among them is he who awaits [his chance]. And they did not alter [the terms of their commitment] by any alteration" (Holy Qur'an, 33:23). The Holy Qur'an even considers truthful people to be those who sacrifice their wealth and their lives in Allah's cause: "The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:15); and "The one who has brought the truth and [they who] believed in it - those are the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 39:33). At the same time, the Holy Qur'an condemns those who tell falsehood: "They only invent falsehood who do not believe in the verses of Allah, and it is those who are the liars" (Holy Qur'an, 16:105). The Prophet (PBUH) encourages people to be truthful, and he warns them against telling lies: "Truth leads to piety, and piety leads to heaven. A man persists in telling the truth until he is enrolled with Allah as a truthful. Falsehood leads to vice, and vice leads to hell. A person persists in telling lies until he is enrolled as a liar."⁽¹⁾

Sheikh Khalid's argument is that if we talk about truthfulness in such a manner, we would be promoting religious ethics in Allah's name, which leads to economic and cultural stagnation, scientific deterioration, and moral suicide. He even warns against making reference to Allah, the Prophet (PBUH), the companions, scholars,

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari on manners (6094) and Muslim (2607).

and anyone who talks about religion. Rather, we have to say that truthfulness is a human value that has been called for by all philosophers as early as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, and later by Kant, Spencer, Descartes, and Durkheim. Sheikh Khalid wants us to see truthfulness as a moral virtue that is necessary for the development of society, a virtue that people have to encourage each other to adopt, a virtue that has to be completely dissociated from religion. He even reminds us that developed countries, such as the UK, France, Germany, Italy, the US, and even China and Russia, all value truthfulness highly without the interference of religion. He claims that we will never be as advanced as they are unless we adopt their values and the ways they apply them, away from the restrictions of religion and its promises of heaven and threats about hell.⁽¹⁾

It is interesting that Sheikh Khalid often uses examples from the biographies of Omar Ibn Al-Khattab, Ali Ibn Abi Talib, Khalid Ibn Al-Walid, and Abu Ubaida, among several of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions. He spends quite a bit of time discussing Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz. Sheikh Khalid contradicts himself when he presents these leading figures of Islam as role models for morality, and then asks us to dissociate them from religion.

Another difference between Sheikh Khalid's views on ethics and mainstream Islamic scholarship is that he sees mankind as the creator of moral values, while mainstream Islamic scholarship sees mankind as the recipient of those values. Prophets were entrusted with teaching these moral values to people, who have spread them one generation after another until they evolved into a universal heritage. Allah says: "And We have already written in the book [of Psalms] after the [previous] mention that the land [of Paradise] is inherited by My righteous servants" (Holy Qur'an, 21:105). Those "righteous servants" are the ones who abide by faith and the moral values of the prophets.

Sheikh Khalid's books were quite popular initially thanks to the promotion efforts of those who hate Islam and are glad to support anyone who attacks it, especially if it is a Muslim scholar. While his first book *From Here We Start* received the appropriate refutation by Sheikh Al-Ghazali, Mohammed Wajdi, and others, the rest of his books were left without criticism. His books have continued to spread doubt within the Egyptian and Arab societies, mostly because of the lack of freedom to publicly refute these claims. For example, Sheikh Khalid's first book was published at a time when the members of the Muslim Brotherhood hardly had any access to the public sphere, as most of them were in jail. The Muslim Brothers were released from prisons in 1950, and they resumed their public service activities. However, they had no organizational structure or access to newspapers and publishing agencies. In fact, the government disbanded the organization and

(1) *This or the Flood*, 1st edition.

made all its activities illegal on 8 December 1948. The only place where they could meet was Sheikh Ahmed Al-Shurabasi's mosque in Al-Munira and only on Fridays. The only newspaper that would publish some of their articles was *Minbar Al-Sharq*, which was run by Sheikh Ali Al-Ghayati, and later *Al-Mabahith* magazine, which Saleh Ashmawi rented to publish their articles, even though they hardly had any funding.

The Muslim Brotherhood regained many of their rights when they chose Hassan Al-Hudaybi, a well-established judge in the Court of Cassation, to be their General Guide following the death of Hassan Al-Banna, the Brotherhood founder. Only then were they able to have their headquarters and get some of their confiscated properties back. In 1952, the Free Officers Movement led a successful revolution with the support of the Muslim Brotherhood to overthrow the King and declare a republic in Egypt. The Nasser regime quickly turned against the Muslim Brotherhood, and tensions built up to open conflict and persecution. During that time, many of the Muslim Brotherhood leaders were assassinated or imprisoned. These developments created the perfect conditions for Sheikh Khalid's controversial arguments against the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, especially in that he targeted the emerging strong Islamic movements, such as those by Hassan Al-Banna in Egypt and Al-Mawdudi in India.

Again, those who know Sheikh Khalid well deny that he used these books to serve political powers, which is laudable, but we still disagree with many of his views. To give credit where credit is due, Sheikh Khalid came up with a deep analysis of Arab and Muslim history that led him to identify the root causes of the cultural and economic stagnation of the Ummah. However, he stopped right there without separating history from theology. Had he looked into the works of Ibn Al-Jawzi, Ibn Khaldoun, Al-Qarafi, Al-Ghazali, Ibn Kathir, and Al-Asfahani, among many others, he would have reached very different conclusions. I am not sure if he had the opportunity to read Dr. Draz's book *The Moral World of the Qur'an*, which deals with many of the same issues.

Sheikh Khalid raises another interesting issue, when he writes: "Rejecting theocracy is not the same thing as rejecting the role of religion in the structure of governments. By the same token, rejecting religious laws is not the same thing as taking religion completely out of legislation. The issue is that religion does not offer a specific model for governance. We do not have necessary and sufficient criteria for what a religious government should look like. Religion only offers a general framework for governance '... whose affairs are [determined by] consultation among themselves' (Holy Qur'an, 42:38), but it does not offer any details beyond this. This leaves it up to people to develop and choose the governance system that works best for them. Otherwise, religion would inhibit the development of societies, and it would not be worthy of being a religion."

Sheikh Khalid offers a similar argument on religious laws. His basic premise is that laws are necessary to establish justice, but they cannot serve this function if they are fossilized in texts. For laws to protect rights and establish justice, they have to be flexible in ways that allow people to reinterpret them to fit their purposes. Thus, he concludes that there can be no religious ethics because it necessarily relies on texts that do not allow change. In other words, he claims that religious ethics cannot serve as the foundation of a legal system because religions cannot cope with social change. He elaborates: "If we assume, for the sake of the argument, that religious ethics was possible at some point in the past, it cannot be suitable for our world today. We live in a different world where intellect leads the way to progress, thanks to a long history of human development. Religion played a key role in the development of this heritage, and it continues to serve as a source of inspiration ... The modern individual is the creator of moral values and the builder of civilization, and as such cannot live in the past. People no longer hope to walk in the footsteps of their forefathers. They would rather create new ways of life that include enjoying life rather than philosophizing about life. There is nothing more futile than efforts to restrain human development in the shackles of the past. Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz was a role model of justice and ethics. He often prayed: 'Oh Allah, please make my intellect useful to me, and make my future better than my past'."⁽¹⁾

I am not sure what Sheikh Khalid's problem with religious ethics is. Every religion has its articles of faith, acts of worship, laws, and ethics. Does he accept religion as an integral whole or is he calling for choosing some aspects of religion and rejecting the rest? Of course, every religion calls on people to adopt moral values: "Indeed, this Holy Qur'an guides to that which is most suitable and gives good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward" (Holy Qur'an, 17:9). These moral values guide the mind, the will, feelings, the family, and society. These moral values are not random commandments that are to be followed blindly; they have conditions and restrictions. Dr. Draz details the fundamental principles of Qur'anic morality, including the nature of moral obligation, moral responsibility, moral intentions, and moral efforts. Sheikh Khalid could have found the answers to his questions in Dr. Draz's work. What Sheikh Khalid sees as issues with Islamic ethics are valid points, but they are actually cultural patterns that have nothing to do with Islam.

Sheikh Khalid continues: "If we adopt this view, what would be the position of the revelation that determines the means and motives of morality? For example, if religion specified gender separation as a means to promote virtue centuries ago, can we choose another means today? If we come up with a new means to achieve

(1) *This or the Flood*, 169-171.

virtue, would we be considered heretics? Religion also chooses circumcision to promote virtue, but secular ethics sees otherwise. If we prefer to not engage in this practice, are we sinners?"⁽¹⁾

Sheikh Khalid's book does not answer either question, even though the answer is quite simple: It is necessary to distinguish the teachings of Islam from cultural practices that many people erroneously associate with religion. Many such cultural practices have been proven to be unrelated to Islam, and the readers are encouraged to refer to Abu Shuqqa's book *Tahrīr Al-Mar'a fī 'Aṣr Al-Risāla* (*The Emancipation of Women at the Time of the Revelation*). Sheikh Khalid should not have been so ambiguous in his claims about circumcision, for it is not clear whether he is talking about males or females.⁽²⁾

In his discussion on the sources of moral obligation, Sheikh Khalid writes: "There are three sources for moral obligation in religious ethics. The first is the true religion, namely the teaching of the Prophet (PBUH) that have not been distorted or changed. The second is the teachings that have been appended to the religion, even though they have nothing to do with religion, such as the hundreds of thousands of hadiths that we know to have been falsely attributed to the Prophet (PBUH). The third includes cultural traditions that became mixed up with religion during its expansion and development, including many non-Islamic traditions. Only the first source is worthy of upholding, by abiding by the good and refraining from evil. This part is not to be changed, and any change in it would amount to abandoning religion wholesale. The other aspects of religion, such as the rules that regulate everyday life, can change and evolve as societies do. This is a permission from Allah allowing people to modify the Shari'a in ways that better fit their lives and their interests."⁽³⁾

Sheikh Khalid ignores the fact that most Muslims do not know these hundreds of thousands of false hadiths. They might know a few hundred, but they are well documented as false hadiths. He also makes a grave error by appealing to the abrogation argument, which has been repeatedly refuted.

Sheikh Khalid puts forward another argument on the choice between the letter of a sacred text and personal interests. He writes: "We have seen leading Muslim scholars state that in cases of conflict between one's interests or well-being and the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah, interests and well-being take priority, because these texts are meant to protect one's well-being and interests, not to hinder achiev-

(1) Ibid, 187.

(2) See treatise entitled *Hukm Al-Shar' fī Khitān Al-'Ināth* (The Rule of Shari'a on Female Circumcision), Cairo: Maktabat Wahba, 4/507-523.

(3) *This or the Flood*, 188.

ing them.”⁽¹⁾ This argument goes back to Najm Al-Din A Tufi (AD 1259-1316), a Hanbali scholar who is thought to have declared personal well-being to be more important than following religious texts. It has been repeatedly demonstrated that this is a serious misunderstanding of Al-Tufi’s argument. Al-Tufi specifically states that the text of Holy Qur’an and the verified Sunnah are not to be disputed or altered. Readers are encouraged to read Al-Tufi’s arguments in his analysis of the Forty Nawawi Hadiths, particularly his discussion of the hadith: “There shall be no injury or return of injury”⁽²⁾ as well as related discussions in *Al-Dīn wal-Siyāsa (Religion and Politics)*, *Al-Siyāsa Al-Shar’iyya (Shari’a-Based Politics)*, and *Dirāsa fī Fiqh Maqāṣid Al-Sahri’a (A Study on the Objectives of Shari’a)*.⁽³⁾

Sheikh Khalid summarizes his view on religious ethics as follows: “Religious ethics which is based on a religious text is actually based on a particular interpretation of that text. This suggests that interpretations of religious texts can change in ways that accommodate social change and people’s needs. In fact, religious ethics is derived from two main sources: superstition and cultural tradition. By now it is obvious that we are actually doing religion and ethics a huge favor by getting rid of so-called religious ethics. Again, religion is a matter of principles rather than rituals and details, especially when it comes to everyday life. Jesus was once asked while giving a sermon: ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me’. But He said to him: ‘Man, who appointed me a judge or arbitrator over you?’ (Luke, 12:14). Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) says: ‘I am only human. If I give you orders regarding religion, follow them. If I give you orders based on my opinion, remember that I am only human’.⁽⁴⁾ In another version, he adds: ‘You know better about your lives’.”⁽⁵⁾

It is rather odd that Sheikh Khalid would quote the Torah and the Bible, which might give readers the impression that these texts were not abrogated. This might even suggest that people have the right to believe in either religion instead of Islam, thinking that they are all monotheistic religions. Both Judaism and Christianity have been distorted, and Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was sent

(1) Ibid, 189.

(2) See *Al-Ta’yīn fī Sharḥ Al-Arba’in* by Al-Tufi, Beirut: Muassasat Al-Rayyan, 234-280. Al-Tufi states that “a hadith is either recurrent, i.e., affirmed by many lines of transmission, or it has a single reference. Either way, it is either explicit regarding a particular ruling or it is open to interpretations. If it is recurrent and explicit, its ruling is final, but the issue is whether this ruling is absolute, i.e., it applies indiscriminately in all cases. Scholars should not lean toward any absolute interpretations. If a text is not obviously absolute and there are clear doubts about its recurrence or references, its ruling should not be applied if it conflicts with anyone’s interests.”

(3) All three books are by Al-Qaradawi: *Al-Dīn Wal-Siyāsa (Religion and Politics)*, Page 96, *Al-Siyāsa Al-Shar’iyya (Shari’a-Based Politics)*, Pages 160-165, and *Dirāsa fī Fiqh Maqāṣid Al-Sahri’a (A Study on the Objectives of Shari’a)*, Pages 128-134.

(4) Narrated via Aisha by Muslim on virtue (2363) and (140).

(5) Narrated by Muslim on virtue (2363) and (141).

with the Holy Qur'an which is meant to be a universal message. However, he quotes an important hadith without explaining the context or the meaning "your lives". This particular hadith is not meant to cancel the Holy Qur'an or all verified hadiths.

This logic has led Sheikh Khalid to some grave errors. For example, he was very critical of those who rebuked Prime Minister Ahmed Maher⁽¹⁾ for his drinking and gambling habits. Sheikh Khalid did not see a problem with these habits, even though they are considered serious sins in Islam. Sheikh Khalid writes: "Ahmed Maher was an honest politician and virtuous man. His opponents convinced people that he is a corrupt person because he drinks alcohol and gambles at the race track. These insignificant personal habits overshadowed all his great virtues. His courageous patriotism, tireless hard work, indisputable honesty, deeply rooted faith, and brilliance were forgotten because of a small glass of wine and his love of horse racing. People forgot all his greatness and focused only on his drinking and gambling. This is a perfect example of how religious ethics fail to offer a progressive understanding of virtue and moral behavior."⁽²⁾

This is an unfair argument, especially when Sheikh Khalid criticizes the majority of Muslims in Egypt who all read "Oh you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful. Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. So will you not desist?" (Holy Qur'an, 5: 90-91). How can Sheikh Khalid blame Muslims for criticizing someone who does not respect these verses, even if it were the Prime Minister? People were not wrong to criticize Ahmed Maher. Sheikh Khalid was wrong to criticize them.

What is really unfortunate is that Sheikh Khalid uses these arguments to attack Muslim scholars who call for establishing Islamic ethics. He even accuses them of bigotry and terrorism because they, as he claims, use fear to promote ethics through reactionary means. For Sheikh Khalid, the use of hope for Allah's mercy and fear of His punishment is a distortion of moral education that only instills fear of Allah. The "dire consequences" of these means, as he claims, are the collapse of culture and the destruction of the Ummah. Apparently, he has issues with Allah's words: "Know that Allah is severe in penalty and that Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 5:98) and "the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval" (Holy Qur'an, 75:20). Instead, he quotes several verses that describe the punishments of the unbe-

(1) Ahmed Maher was the Wafd party leader and later Egyptian Prime Minister between 1944 and 1945.

(2) Ibid, Page 195.

lievers, the tyrants, and hypocrites. There are many such verses, and they are quite specific and clear, but Sheikh Khalid decides to treat them as metaphors, thus denying the existence of hell and punishment. He writes: "I do not mean that all the verses that mention hell and punishment should be removed from the Holy Qur'an. I am only saying that they are metaphors used to encourage those who respond to fear to obey Allah and refrain from doing evil. We also know that the rulings in some verses were abrogated. Those verses about hell and punishment are only there for historical and recitation purposes. Their function is to describe a phase in human development when fear was the way to perfection. Using scare tactics to promote ethics today is itself immoral and anti-religion."⁽¹⁾

It seems that Sheikh Khalid does not like the verses that describe the punishment of the unbelievers in hell. He does not seem to think they are necessary in this day and age. He only wants to keep the verses and hadiths that mention Allah's mercy and forgiveness. The Prophet (PBUH) once saw a woman holding a child close to her chest. He said to those with him: "Do you think this woman would ever throw her child into fire?" They said: "She would never throw the child into fire." The Prophet said: "Allah is more kind to his servants than this woman is to her child."⁽²⁾ Sheikh Khalid uses this hadith to conclude that "not a single human being will go to hell; there is no hell or torment."⁽³⁾

In his campaign against religious ethics, Islamic or Christian alike, Sheikh Khalid focuses on the means of promoting ethics. He writes: "What are the means of promoting religious ethics today? They are the same means that were used 2,000 years ago. The religious ethics that was sent with Moses was not enough; thus Allah sent Jesus to continue the message. However, that was not sufficient either, and Mohammed (PBUH) was sent to renew the message and establish a new path. Do we really want to keep going down the same path that has become antiquated? This is the ultimate purpose of religious ethics, and religious texts are used to promote it in the same reactionary and ignorant way. The Bible, for example, states that women should cover their hair: 'For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off' (Corinthians, 11:6) and 'It is good for a man not to touch a woman'. (Corinthians, 1:7). The Holy Qur'an suggests the same: "Oh Prophet, tell your wives and your daughters and the women of the believers to bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments' (Holy Qur'an, 33:59). The Prophet (PBUH) also says: 'When a woman reaches puberty, it does not befit her to display but this and this' and he pointed to his face

(1) Ibid, Page 199.

(2) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Al-Bukhari on manners (5999) and Muslim on repentance (2754).

(3) *This or the Flood*, 1st edition, 200.

and hands.⁽¹⁾ Religious ethics ignores the fact that such rulings have to do with social and cultural issues rather than faith and creed. It even ignores the hadith: 'You know better about your lives'.⁽²⁾ Sheikh Khalid uses one unverified hadith to cancel hundreds, if not thousands, of verified hadiths, and to cancel the verses of the Holy Qur'an. This is not how scholarly research is conducted. This is a clear violation of academic integrity and scholarly principles.

This argument takes an interesting turn when he writes: "Religious ethics kept holding on to its outdated approach, which led to the pitfall of limiting ethics to sexual behavior. Religious morality focuses on sexuality to a disturbing degree that actually pushes people into immorality. As a result, women in our society are seen as different creatures that should not be looked at, touched, or even approached. Human intellect has developed far beyond this extreme view. We now know that virtue flourishes in societies that have no marriage between the sexes. Those are societies that have recovered from the inferiority complex imposed by religious ethics. Religious ethics cannot promote virtue as long as it relies on scare tactics and antiquated means of promoting virtue. This is a tyranny, whereas ethics is about freedom. This is stagnation, while virtue is progressive."⁽³⁾

Now, we start to see a consistent pattern in Sheikh Khalid's arguments; he mixes Islam with things that we all abhor. Anyone who has studied Islam knows fully well that exaggerating the issue of sexuality and presenting it as the only motive that derives morality is unacceptable. It is also unacceptable to undermine the effects of economic, social, and political factors that influence people's behavior. The interesting part is that Sheikh Khalid does not offer any solutions to the problems associated with sexuality other than removing barriers between the sexes and eliminating any balance in gender relations. This discussion ignores all the Qur'anic verses and hadiths that deal with intimate relationships, because – according to Sheikh Khalid – these are social issues that should not involve religious ethics. The contradiction here is that Sheikh Khalid states that "Islam does not concern itself with society, and it does not offer solutions for its problems. How can such a claim be possible?" The Prophet (PBUH) states that praying in a group is much better than praying individually.⁽⁴⁾ How can Sheikh Khalid claim that focusing on fighting social corruption is better than praying and fasting? The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Shall I tell you what is better than praying, fasting,

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Abu Dawud on clothing (4104), commenting that it is a false hadith because Khalid Ibn Durayk did not live at the same time as Aisha, Al-Bayhaqi on marriage (13274), repeating Abu Dawud's statement, and Al-Albani (corrected; 187) in *Ghāyat Al-Marām*.

(2) *This or the Flood*, 1st edition, 201.

(3) Ibid, 201-202.

(4) See hadith narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari on the call for prayers (645) and Muslim on mosques (650).

and giving to *Zakat*? Mending discord and beware of hatred - it strips you of your religion.”⁽¹⁾ Islam is indeed heavily invested in social well-being as much as it is interested in the well-being of the individual, the family the nation, and humanity at large.⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda by Ahmed (sound; 27508), Abu Dawud on manners (4909), Al-Tirmidhi on the End of Days (2509), Al-Albani in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* (corrected; 414), and Ibn Hibban on reconciliation (5092).

(2) See *Malāmiḥ Al-Mujtama' Al-Muslim Alladhi Nanshuduh* (Features of the Muslim Society We Hope For) by Al-Qaradawi.

Chapter 3:

The Foundations of Moral Philosophy in Islam

3.1 Moral Obligation

Introduction

When reading the scholarly works of Dr. Mohammed Abdullah Draz's, one gains access to a unique world shaped by encyclopedic knowledge and rich life experiences. As a scholar, he had the rare opportunity to develop a deep understanding of different cultures and languages, to study the canons of Islamic Studies and the latest theories, and to incorporate all of this into an interdisciplinary approach to moral philosophy. This is what made him quite capable of dealing with some of the most complicated and controversial aspects of Islamic moral philosophy. He successfully avoided the pitfall of scholarly pursuit thanks to his ability to discern and distinguish between assumptions and facts, the subjective and the objective, and the truth and what might look like the truth.

I wish I could include many excerpts from Dr. Draz's book *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qur'ān (The Moral World of the Qur'an)*. This book is essentially an encyclopedia of Islamic knowledge, as it offers detailed analyses of the Holy Qur'an, hadith, jurisprudence, Sufism, and philosophy. However, it is meant for researchers and experts, who are already well familiarized with the subject matter, and the controversies involved. Dr. Draz wrote this book to challenge the status quo and prevalent views on Islamic Studies in Western academia. This book is best left for experts, but in the following sections, I will present some of its main arguments in a more accessible way with commentary and discussions.

Dr. Draz explains moral obligation as follows: "Moral obligation is the foundation of any moral doctrine, because obligation is the pivot, or nucleus, of any ethical system. Without a well-defined view of moral obligation, any ethical system would not be worthy of its name. The importance of moral obligation has to do with moral responsibility, without which justice is impossible to achieve. In the absence of justice, anarchy prevails. This is the Principle of Morality, which also applies to legal theories.

We can now see the direction in which some modern theorists of morality are trying to take us, such as Guyau's *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction (Outline of a Morality Without Obligation or Sanction)*. How is it possible to imagine a moral rule without obligation? This is a contradiction in terms. Do we treat the conscience as only a tool for aesthetic appreciation? Shouldn't we treat morality differently from aesthetics? More specifically, if everything that is good is necessarily beautiful, should we assume that the reverse is also true?

Of course, the notion of virtue is beautiful in its own right, even though it is an abstract concept. However, there is a lot more to morality than mere aesthetics,

because, by its very nature, morality is manifested in actions. We might not see a direct connection between beauty and actions, but such a direct connection is evident between morality and actions. For example, we might be in awe of beauty of the celestial sphere, but this does not motivate us to replicate it. An artist might be inspired to create a beautiful piece of art, but there is no obligation to actually produce it. Rather, it is the artist who decides how to transcend inspiration into reality, if and when he/she pleases. Even if an artist feels internally compelled to produce a piece of art, nobody else is compelled to act the same way, for aesthetic appreciation is a very individual experience. More importantly, there is no conflict between the artist's feelings and inspiration. What is critical is that a work of art might be deficient in a way that is ascetically displeasing, yet it would not irk the conscience, and the artist cannot be accused of having done something immoral. Morality is different in that it has authority over everyone. People feel compelled to act morally and to make the same moral judgments. This moral necessity is what makes people abhor immoral behavior. In the discussions below, we will see how the Holy Qur'an presents moral necessity, which can be classified into moral imperatives, prescribed moral acts, and moral duties. Now that we have defined moral obligation and argued for its necessity, we can discuss its nature."⁽¹⁾

For Muslims, moral obligation stems from the sound moral instinct Allah has endowed people with. Muslims are consciously aware of this instinct, which drives people to act morally and causes them to cringe when they see or hear of immoral acts. This instinct also motivates Muslims to refrain from doing evil and to stay away from those who promote it. Moral obligation is well documented in the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and scholarly consensus. This consensus comes into play in the absence of explicit texts in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah that state moral obligations.

As discussed earlier, the consensus of Muslim scholars is a source of moral obligation because the Ummah cannot reach a consensus on evil. Allah says: "If the disbelievers deny it [the truth], then We have entrusted it to a people who are not therein disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 6:89) and "Among those We created is a community which guides by truth and thereby establishes justice" (Holy Qur'an, 7:181). It is not necessary to have a text for every instance of moral judgment. Scholars can issue moral judgments based on analogy to already existing texts. The four sources of moral judgment are actually one source: Allah. Only Allah can determine what is permissible, forbidden, or commendable. The sources of moral obligation in Islam do not contradict each other, but support each other and gain their legitimacy from the same source, namely the Holy Qur'an.

(1) *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qur'ān* (The Moral World of the Qur'an), Mohammed Abdullah Draz, translated by Abd Al-Sabur Shahin, 21-23.

Having accepted Allah as the only Allah, Islam as the true religion, the Holy Qur'an as the guide, and the Prophet (PBUH) as Allah's Messenger, Muslims are required to accept Allah's judgments. Muslims should not hesitate to abide by Allah's orders. In the story of Adam and Eve, Satan disobeyed Allah when He ordered all angels to prostrate to Adam: "The angels prostrated - all of them entirely, Except Iblees [Satan] who refused to be among those who prostrated" (Holy Qur'an, 15:30-31) and "He [Satan] refused and was arrogant and became of the disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 2:34). When Allah asked Satan: "What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?" [Satan] said: "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay" (Holy Qur'an, 7:12). The phrase "I commanded you" is a clear indication that Allah's commands must be obeyed immediately, and we know the consequences of Satan's disobedience. He was damned and deprived of worshipping Allah.

The faithful do not hesitate to obey Allah's commandments, and they have no right to rebel or disobey. Disobeying is not appropriate for a weak poor servant when dealing with the Almighty Creator who owns everything and everyone on earth and in the skies above. Allah says: "It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error" (Holy Qur'an, 33:36).

Allah describes the hypocrites as those who "When it is said to them, 'Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger', you see the hypocrites turning away from you in aversion" (Holy Qur'an, 4:61) and "But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [Oh, Mohammed], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission" (Holy Qur'an, 4:65). The Holy Qur'an condemns the hypocrites who reject Allah's word unless it serves their purposes, and it praises the faithful who accept the commandments of the Holy Qur'an: "But the hypocrites say, 'We have believed in Allah and in the Messenger, and we obey'; then a party of them turns away after that. And those are not believers" (Holy Qur'an, 24:47).

The Prophet (PBUH) rebuked Osama Ibn Zayd, who was the closest person to his heart, because Osama did not abide by Allah's command in the verse: "Oh you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer', aspiring for the goods of worldly life" (Holy Qur'an, 4:94). When Osama was in battle against the unbelievers, he killed a man who said: "There is no Allah but Allah" assuming that the man did not truly believe and only said so to avoid the sword. The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Oh Osama, did you kill him after he professed that there is no true Allah except Allah?" Osama said: "Oh Messenger of Allah!

He professed it only to save his life.” The Prophet (PBUH) asked: “Why didn’t you cut his heart open to find out whether he had said so sincerely or not?” Osama commented: “He [the Prophet] continued repeating it until I wished that I had embraced Islam only that day.”⁽¹⁾ Some of the early Muslims killed their own flesh and blood in battle because they chose to wage war against Islam, including Abu Ubayda Ibn Al-Jarrah who is said to have killed his own father in the Battle of Badr,⁽²⁾ but killing someone who professes that there is no Allah but Allah is a completely different issue.

Allah says: “Let those who dissent from the Prophet’s (PBUH) order beware, lest fitnah strikes them or a painful punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 24:63). Allah also orders the faithful to obey the Prophet (PBUH):

- “Obey Allah and obey the Messenger; but if you turn away - then upon him is only that [duty] with which he has been charged, and upon you is that with which you have been charged. And if you obey him, you will be [rightly] guided” (Holy Qur’an, 24:54).
- “Oh you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and do not invalidate your deeds” (Holy Qur’an, 47:33).
- “Oh you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you” (Holy Qur’an, 4:59).
- “He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 4:80).
- “And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away – then know that upon Our Messenger is only [the responsibility for] clear notification” (Holy Qur’an, 5:92).
- “Oh you who have believed, obey Allah and His Messenger and do not turn from him while you hear [his order]. And do not be like those who say: ‘We have heard’, while they do not hear. Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are the deaf and dumb who do not use reason” (Holy Qur’an, 8:20-22).

In summary, moral obligation in Islam has only one single source, namely Allah, Whose orders are not to be disobeyed. For scholarly and jurisprudence purposes, scholars of Islamic ethics identify four sources of moral judgement: the Holy Qur’an, the Sunnah, consensus, and analogy, all of which go back to the one true source. In the remainder of this chapter, I will discuss Dr. Draz’s analysis of these sources.

(1) Narrated via Osama Ibn Zayd by Al-Bukhari on the battles (4269), Muslim on faith (96), Abu Dawud on jihad (2643), and Al-Nassa’i in *Kitāb Al-Siyar* (8540).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on the companions’ biographies (9/27), but he comments that the narration is discontinuous.

Sources of Moral Obligation In Islam

1. The Holy Qur'an

Dr. Draz writes: "Since Muslims view the Holy Qur'an as Allah's true word, it fulfills all the necessary and sufficient conditions to be treated as the true expression of divine will. The question now is whether the Holy Qur'an should be the only source for Islamic legislation. If other texts or methods are allowed to serve as additional sources", would that amount to associating other insights or wisdom with Allah's? Let's see what authority the other sources might have.

2. The Sunnah

Muslim scholars agree that the practical teachings of the Sunnah as well as the Prophet's (PBUH) hadiths constitute a second source for the Islamic legislation after the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an itself orders Muslims to obey the Prophet's (PBUH) dispensations without questioning them as an inherent part of faith:

- "But no, by your Lord, they will not [truly] believe until they make you, [Oh Mohammed], judge concerning that over which they dispute among themselves and then find within themselves no discomfort from what you have judged and submit in [full, willing] submission" (Holy Qur'an, 4:65).
- "He who obeys the Messenger has obeyed Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 4:80).
- "Whatever the Messenger has given you - take; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from it" (Holy Qur'an, 59:7).
- "Obey the Messenger - that you may receive mercy" (Holy Qur'an, 24:56).

However, if we look closely at the Prophet's dispensations, we realize that they do not impose religious obligations unless they directly reiterate the Holy Qur'an. In other words, in the absence of divine revelation, the sayings and actions of the Prophet as a human being are not binding. This distinction is made clear by the verse: "Oh you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life" (Holy Qur'an, 8:24). The Prophet (PBUH) himself says: "When I command you about something out of my personal opinion, keep in mind that I am only human. When I command you about something pertaining to religion, do accept it, for I would not lie about Allah."⁽¹⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) emphasizes that his views on worldly matters are not infallible, because they are not part of the Message: "You have better knowledge in the

(1) Narrated via Rafi'a Ibn Khudaij by Muslim (2362) without the clause "for I would not lie about Allah," and via Talha Ibn Ubaid Allah (2361).

affairs of the world”⁽¹⁾. He even explains that without divine revelation, he might make mistakes when it comes to the details of the moral system, jurisprudence, and acts of worship. This is why the Holy Qur’an admonishes the Prophet (PBUH) for several mistakes in different situations. For example, he took a merciful approach toward the unbelievers in a situation where his actions should have been more severe: “It is not for a prophet to have captives [of war] until he thoroughly subdues the land” (Holy Qur’an, 8:67). In other contexts, Allah addresses the Prophet (PBUH): “May Allah pardon you, [Oh Mohammed]; why did you give them permission [to remain behind]?” (Holy Qur’an, 9:43), and “It is not for the Prophet and those who have believed to ask forgiveness for the polytheists” (Holy Qur’an, 9:113). One of the most telling examples is when the Prophet (PBUH) was judging in a case of theft and he may have erred in his judgement were it not for the revelation that came down to serve justice: “Indeed, We have revealed to you, [Oh Mohammed], the Book in truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate” (Holy Qur’an, 4:105).

There are many similar examples in the Sunnah. The Prophet (PBUH) once told two disputing men who asked him to be their judge: “I am only human, and you ask me to be your judge. Perhaps some of you are more eloquent than others. I only judge according to what I hear. He whom I, by my judgment, give the undue share out of the right of a Muslim, I in fact give him a portion of hell.”⁽²⁾ In fact, the Prophet (PBUH) sometimes made mistakes while leading prayers. Once, when he had finished leading them, his companions noticed that he had done something different from usual. They asked: “Oh Allah’s Messenger! Has there been any change in the prayers?” He said: “What is it?” They said: “You have prayed so much and so much.” The Prophet (PBUH) bent his legs, faced Mecca, and performed two prostrations and finished his prayers. When he turned his face to his companions, he said: “If there had been any change in the prayers, I would have told you, but I am only human like you, and I am liable to forget like you. If I forget something, remind me.”⁽³⁾

The Prophet clearly declared that he was infallible only when serving as Allah’s messenger. Once he delivered and explained the message, and the collective memory of the community absorbed it, his human nature took over, thus making him liable to make mistakes. However, he never persisted in making the same mistake or holding the same wrong opinion. If he did not retract and correct himself, revelations would remind him and correct his errors. Otherwise, the

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Muslim (2363).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on legal rulings (2680), Muslim on judgments (1713), Ahmed (25670), Al-Tirmidhi on legal rulings (1339), Al-Nassa’i on the manners of judges (5401), and Ibn Majah on legal rulings (2317).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari on prayers (401) and Muslim on mosques (572).

whole community would make the same mistake and stray off the true path. Allah says: “Allah would not let a people stray after He has guided them until He makes clear to them what they should avoid. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of all things” (Holy Qur’an, 9:115). Without continuous correction, all the Prophet’s (PBUH) errors would have become a model to be followed and emulated. In fact, the lack of correction would have been interpreted as affirmation of their validity, and people would have had every right to treat them as the truth. There are very few such errors, and they are well documented along with their rectifications.

In summary, every verified hadith that constitutes part of the Prophet’s (PBUH) message is considered an expression of divine will, and Muslims see it as having the same moral authority as the Holy Qur’an’s. If a verified hadith offers more details and explanations than the Holy Qur’an offers, this hadith is considered to be a guide to the Qur’anic text.

3. Consensus

In the previous section, we have seen how and under what circumstances the Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah functions as a source of moral obligation. In this section, I focus on the third most powerful source of moral obligation and legislation, namely the moral authority of consensus. The authority of social consensus derives its legitimacy from some Qur’anic verses, such as: “You are the best ummah [community] produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 3:110). There is some debate on whether the “community” here refers to the Muslim Ummah in general or only the first Muslim community that witnessed the revelation. The later interpretation is most likely the correct one,⁽¹⁾ because there is always a particular group of people with a shared vision who serve as the community founders. If this vision is supported by the Holy Qur’an, it is seen as morally valid and can be used as a moral standard.

The Holy Qur’an establishes the obligation to obey the leaders of the Ummah in the same way that it establishes the obligation to obey Allah and the Prophet (PBUH). However, there is a caveat of possible conflicts, in which case the community has to refer to the two main authorities: “Oh you who have believed, obey Allah, and obey the Messenger, and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger” (Holy Qur’an, 4:59). This verse makes it clear that as long as there is mutual agreement, there is no need to seek another moral standard to establish justice.

(1) My view on this issue is that the former is the more likely interpretation, because the verse mentions the Ummah in the generic sense, rather than a particular generation.

If we take a closer look at the Sunnah, we realize that consensus is not limited to the first Muslim community, as one might interpret the relevant Qur'anic verses. Rather, consensus applies as a source of moral obligation indefinitely. Evidence for this claim comes from the undisputed sound hadith: "There will always be a group of people from my Ummah who will remain triumphant on the true path and continue to be triumphant against their opponents. He who deserts them shall not be able to do them any harm. They will remain in this position until Allah's Command is executed"⁽¹⁾ and in another version: "They will remain in this position until the Final Hour."⁽²⁾ This hadith guarantees that the Ummah will practically never have a consensus over a falsehood, since there will always be a group of Muslims who will hold on to the truth. Therefore, it is agreed that social consensus is a high moral authority for all times. In fact, consensus can be used to interpret the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, and anyone who rejects consensus would be an outsider as in the case of Shiites, Motazilites, and Khawarij."⁽³⁾

Further evidence in support of Dr. Draz's main argument comes from the Holy Qur'an: "And whosoever opposes the Messenger after guidance has become clear to him and follows other than the way of the believers - We will give him what he has taken and drive him into Hell, and evil it is as a destination" (4:115). This verse indicates that following any path other than that of the faithful is a deviation from the Ummah's consensus, and it is therefore a punishable behavior. Allah also says: "And thus do We detail the verses, and [thus] the way of criminals will become evident" (Holy Qur'an, 6:55). This verse explicitly states that the path of criminals is well known, and that the faithful are required to stay away from it. The same idea is reiterated in "Follow the way of those who turn back to Me [in repentance]. Then to Me will be your return, and I will inform you about what you used to do" (Holy Qur'an, 31:15).

It is important to note here that consensus means the consensus of scholars, who have achieved the status of independent scholarship. This status is achieved only after studying the cannons of Islamic jurisprudence and developing a deep understanding of the Shari'a. The scholars whose consensus is a source of moral obligation have to be representatives of the entire Ummah across nations, ethnicities, and continents. In other words, they have to be qualified as independent scholars, and they have to be free to express their views without fear or reservation. If they disagree, they cannot impose their views; they have to establish a unanimous agreement, or a substantial majority, e.g., a two thirds majority.

(1) Narrated via Muawiya Ibn Abi Sufyan by Al-Bukhari on the Five Pillars (3116) and Muslim on leadership (1037).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in adhering to the Qur'an and the Sunnah (7312).

(3) See *Irshād Al-Fuḥūl* by Al-Sawkani (1/197-198). Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1st edition, 1999 and *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qur'ān* (The Moral World of the Qur'an), Mohammed Abdullah Draz, translated by Abd Al-Sabur Shahin, 37-43.

4. Analogy

While the Zahirites, a purely exegetical school of Islamic thought, limited the sources of legislation to the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and consensus, all other schools agree to follow in the footsteps of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions in acknowledging analogy as a fourth and final source. The question now is whether this form of independent rational legislation is legitimate, even though it was denied to the communal decision and the Prophet (PBUH) himself. The answer is no.

Analogy presupposes the existence of model cases that can be compared to new ones. Thus, the existing prototype cases needed to establish analogy have to be mentioned in the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah, or at least there has to be a consensus concerning them. Either way, analogy is valid only if it establishes a cause⁽¹⁾ or a similarity.⁽²⁾ Thus, if an already existing ruling is established and substantiated by a text or through consensus, it can be generalized to similar cases through analogy. The substantiated original ruling is accepted, even by the Zahirites, as a necessary and sufficient condition for generalizing that ruling to other cases that are either similar in their causes or nature.

What if it is not easy to establish an analogy, perhaps because the similarities of cause or nature are not immediately obvious? Should we rely on logical deduction to reach results that are compatible with the spirit of the Shari'a? My opinion is that the answer should be in the affirmative, but only in a gradient manner. The Zahirites do not offer an answer to this question, but their silence does not eliminate the possibility of misusing logical deduction to establish false analogies.

The Maliki School uses precedents from the experiences of early Muslims to allow more freedom of logical deduction. For example, Imam Malik recognizes logical deduction as a means to establish analogies to resolve new cases. In doing so, he not only relied on specific texts from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, but also the general principles used to reach already existing rulings. Thus, new cases can themselves be used as precedents to establish analogies for future cases. Moreover, he developed principles for moral judgment, such as the concept of absolute

(1) Analogy by cause is when a decision is made based on a precedent that shares the same reasons for a ruling. For example, The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah categorically forbid wine, but they do not say anything about other alcoholic beverages. Different kinds of alcoholic beverages are ruled to be forbidden because they can induce intoxication, which is the cause for forbidding wine.

(2) Analogy by similarity is when a decision is made based on a precedent that is similar in nature. For example, the Prophet PBUH was once asked about kissing while fasting. He answered, "It is like swishing your mouth while fasting." Also, when Al-Khath'amiya asked him about performing *Hajj* on behalf of her father who was too old to ride a camel, he said, "What if he had debts and you paid them off on his behalf? Would that benefit your father? It is best to pay off debts to Allah first." Omar Ibn Al-Khattab wrote to Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari, "If you hesitate about something and the Qur'an and the Sunnah do not have a clear answer, find a similar case and apply whatever is closest to the truth."

good as the ultimate goal of legislation that has to be achieved by all means possible. Thanks to this approach, Imam Malik was able to resolve many jurisprudence and moral issues, even though there are a few cases where he could not resolve conflicts between his rulings and the texts of Shari'a.⁽¹⁾

No matter how deeply we delve into the details of Islamic schools of jurisprudence, there is one fact that remains indisputable. This fact is that all the efforts of jurisprudence scholarship aim to reach the one source of justice and morality, namely Allah's rule. This rule is stated in the Holy Qur'an, first and foremost, and the hadith is the main secondary source for explanations. If there is no text in the Holy Qur'an or the Sunnah, analogy can help determine this rule, as long as it agrees with the spirit of the text and there is a consensus on it.

Allah is the source of legislation, and everyone else serves, directly or indirectly, as a means to establish His rule. However, we are yet to discuss the essence of moral obligation in the Holy Qur'an. All we have done thus far is attribute instinctive moral legislation to divine legislation, which is already encoded in the human mind. However, as we have already discussed, human intellect is imperfect, and is therefore incapable of developing a moral system that is comprehensive and perfect. In order to have a perfect moral system, it has to come from absolute knowledge and eternal light. It can only come from the Perfect.

We have concluded that all four sources of Islamic legislation stem from the same source, namely Allah. However, the Holy Qur'an does not present divine

(1) Here is an interesting example: If we are in a state of war, and the enemies are using our prisoners as human shields to occupy our land, can we attack or are we required to hold our fire? Allah says: "Do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right" (Holy Qur'an, 6:151). Imam Malik resolves this dilemma by choosing the least harmful approach depending on the situation. He justifies his ruling by stating that if we do nothing to avoid harming our prisoners, we put the rest of our soldiers in eminent danger. Moreover, not doing anything does not guarantee the safety of the prisoners. Islamic jurisprudence establishes that the well-being of the majority has priority over the well-being of the minority or individuals. He concludes his argument by saying: "We have to do everything possible to save our prisoners, but we cannot lay down our weapons. We have to continue to fight, even if we have to risk our prisoners." Here is another example: Can a judge order the detention of someone accused of theft if there is no hard evidence, witnesses, or a confession? It is quite possible that this person is innocent, and the Shari'a makes it clear that we cannot harm anyone in their person, property, or honor, unless they commit a crime. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Everything a Muslim has is forbidden for other Muslims, including his person, property, and honor." Imam Malik justifies detention in this case as follows: It is rare for a criminal to confess, commit a crime in the presence of witnesses, or be caught in the act of committing a crime. If these are the only requirements for punishment, most crimes will go unpunished. At the same time, it is our duty to protect people and properties, establish law and order, and serve justice. Therefore, we have to apply acceptable measures, not to force a defendant to give a false confession under duress, but to offer evidence." It is very important to note here that the Maliki School does not accept such measures as legal unless there is credible evidence against the defendant. See *Dustūr Al-Akhḷāq fī Al-Qur'ān (The Moral World of the Qur'an)*, 49.

orders as a self-sufficient absolute authority. Rather, it is interesting to see how the Holy Qur'an almost always offers moral justifications for every legal ruling, along with explanations of the moral values that serve as the foundations of its teachings. For example, when the Holy Qur'an encourages us to settle disputes with our family members, even if these settlements might come at the expense of some of our personal interests, it explains that "settlement is good" (4:128). When it orders us to be just to others when engaging in business transactions, it reiterates: "That is good" (Holy Qur'an, 17:35). To explain the need for the modesty principle that encourages men to avert their gaze and refrain from illicit sexual behavior, it states: "That is purer for them" (Holy Qur'an, 24:30). When the Holy Qur'an orders us to seek causes before issuing judgments, it warns "lest you harm people out of ignorance and become, over what you have done, regretful" (49:6). Even when it orders us to document our debts and their due dates, it explains: "That is more just in the sight of Allah and stronger as evidence and more likely to prevent doubt between you" (Holy Qur'an, 2:282).

In addition to providing the moral justifications for specific actions, the Holy Qur'an directs us toward spiritual values and generalized moral principles. Allah says: "Say, 'Not equal are the evil and the good, although the abundance of evil might impress you' (Holy Qur'an, 5:100); 'But the clothing of righteousness - that is best' (Holy Qur'an, 7:26); and 'whomsoever has been given wisdom has certainly been given much good'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:269). In fact, the Holy Qur'an states the basic principles that serve as the foundation of the entire divine Shari'a. Allah says: "Indeed, Allah does not order immorality" (Holy Qur'an, 7:28) and "Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct" (Holy Qur'an, 16:90). What we initially thought to be the original source of Islamic ethics, namely the Holy Qur'an, turns out to be based on more abstract moral principles. The divine mind⁽¹⁾ is stricter than the human mind in this regard, as it does not want to stick to the letter of the text as the source of moral obligation. Rather, it directs us to the essence of ethics. The divine order is easier to accept when it is coupled with this objective fact, and this acceptance is what establishes the moral authority.

The issue is, of course, that we cannot always discern the essence of good. As all essences, we do not see it directly in its pure form. We can only perceive glimpses of this essence thanks to the limited light we get from our instincts. The truth is that there is only one pure and unlimited light that can encompass this essence in its totality. Thus, the faithful should follow the divine mind as their guide to true morality, and treat the abstract notion of moral values as the source of moral obligation. It is the essence of the mind and the true source of morality.⁽²⁾

(1) It is not clear what Dr. Draz means by this term.

(2) *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qur'ān* (The Moral World of the Qur'an), Mohammed Abdullah Draz, translated by Abd Al-Sabur Shahin, 43-53.

3.2 Moral Responsibility

We now turn to the issue of moral responsibility. Dr. Draz writes: “The concept of moral obligation is necessarily associated with two other concepts: responsibility and sanctions. These three concepts are necessarily interdependent, in the sense that if one of them is missing, the other two become irrelevant and meaningless. Obligation without responsibility means without someone to be obligated, which is impossible, whereas obligation without consequences, i.e., sanctions, is a contradiction of terms. The very definition of responsibility is to be obligated and accountable.

The term “responsibility” can mean different things. For instance, it can be used loosely to describe volunteering to take on duties even though there is no obligation or accountability. There is also the concept of divine responsibility. Allah has always been the only Creator of this world and the Almighty, with all power over it; therefore, Allah is responsible for His creation, even though there is no obligation and the question of accountability does not arise. To void any confusion about terminology, let’s limit our discussion to human responsibility. One might argue that human responsibility does not necessarily entail or presuppose obligation. To avoid this issue, let’s assume, for the sake of the argument, that there is a well-established moral ideal that requires individuals to be responsible to themselves. In the remainder of this chapter, we will discuss the generalizations that follow from these premises as well as the moral, religious, and social conditions of moral responsibility.

Defining Responsibility

Responsibility means that every individual is accountable to his or her own conscience, or moral instinct, for their actions. It is the conscience, or the innate moral instinct, that rebukes or punishes the individual if he/she commits an immoral act or fails to fulfill a moral duty. It is also the conscience, or the moral instinct, which generates a sense of inner peace and happiness if one fulfills his/her moral duties. In Islam, the conscience, or the moral instinct, is called the “reproaching soul”, which is mentioned in “I swear by the Day of Resurrection - and I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]” (Holy Qur’an, 75:1-2).

Religion defines responsibility differently from philosophy, because religion sees people as accountable before Allah, as repeatedly asserted in the Holy Qur’an. In Islam, this accountability is evident in the afterlife:

- *“Then We will surely question those to whom [a message] was sent, and We will surely question the messengers” (Holy Qur’an, 7:6).*

- *“By your Lord, We will surely question them all- about what they used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 15:92-93).*
- *“Stop them [the unbelievers]; indeed, they are to be questioned” (Holy Qur’an, 37:24).*
- *“They will surely be questioned on the Day of Resurrection about what they used to fabricate” (Holy Qur’an, 29:13).*
- *“Indeed, it [the Holy Qur’an] is a remembrance for you and your people, and you [all] are going to be questioned” (Holy Qur’an, 43:44).*
- *“By Allah, you [the unbelievers] will surely be questioned about what you used to fabricate” (Holy Qur’an, 16:56).*
- *“You [the unbelievers] will surely be questioned about what you used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 16:93).*
- *“Then you [the unbelievers] will surely be asked that Day about pleasure” (Holy Qur’an, 102:8).*

Individuals, in Islam, are only accountable for their own actions, which they choose to do or not do. Nobody is accountable for another’s actions: “Oh mankind, fear your Lord and fear a Day when no father will avail his son, nor will a son avail his father at all” (Holy Qur’an, 31:33). It is, by definition, a personal responsibility regardless of how closely people may be related. Allah says: “Say, ‘You will not be asked about what we committed, and we will not be asked about what you do’” (Holy Qur’an, 34:25). It is interesting that in this verse, the Prophet (PBUH) is commanded to attribute the actions referred to as “what we committed” to himself and his community, while only “what you do” is attributed to the unbelievers addressed.

Conversely, Christianity, which we believe to have been distorted, affirms that people are born with the responsibility of the original sin. But why should they be held responsible for a sin they did not commit, or even witness? Besides, we believe that Allah forgave Adam and absolved him: “Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]” (Holy Qur’an, 20:121-122). Adam’s error was not a mortal sin. He erred because of his weak nature: “We had already taken a promise from Adam before, but he forgot; and We found not in him determination” (Holy Qur’an, 20:115).

Also, unlike Judaism, Islam does not hold an individual or an entire generation responsible for the actions of any preceding individual or generation. Allah says: “That was a nation which has passed on. It will have [the consequence of] what

it earned, and you will have what you have earned. And you will not be asked about what they used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 2:134; 141). The Holy Qur’an establishes the principle of personal reasonability in the verse: “Every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another” (6:164). Moreover, the Holy Qur’an asserts that this is the same principle established in previous scriptures: “Has he not been informed of what was in the scriptures of Moses - And [of] Abraham, who fulfilled [his obligations] - That no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another - And that there is not for man except that [good] for which he strives - And that his effort is going to be seen - Then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense” (53:36-41).

An individual might participate with others in crime or sin, but each is responsible only for their own intentions and actions, even if their actions amount to murder. Suppose a group of people partake in a murder: one brings a sword, another sharpens it, a third holds down the victim, and a fourth does the killing. The murderer is not just the one who does the actual killing; they are all murderers. Omar Ibn Al-Khattab executed five or seven people for killing one man whom they had murdered secretly. Omar said: “Had all the people of Sana joined forces in his murder, I would have executed them all.”⁽¹⁾

This view of shared responsibility for shared actions extends to those who set examples of good or evil deeds. For example, the punishment of someone who initiates a sin to be followed by others is more severe than the punishment of someone who follows. By the same token, the reward for someone who sets an example of good deeds is higher than the reward for those who follow suit. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “He who introduces a good practice in Islam to be followed by others will certainly be rewarded for it and for everyone who follows, without their rewards being diminished in any respect. He who introduces an evil practice in Islam to be followed will certainly bear the burden of it and of those who follow without theirs being diminished in any respect.”⁽²⁾ For example, Cain committed the first murder in human history: “Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land – it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one – it is as if he had saved mankind entirely” (Holy Qur’an, 6:32). Accordingly, the Prophet (PBUH) tells us that Allah has punished Cain for his crime and made him partially responsible for every murder that is committed until the end of the world.⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on compensations (6896), Malik in *Al-Muwatta’a* (2/871), Ibn Abi Shaybah (28266), and Al-Hafidh Ibn Hajar in *Fath Al-Bārī* (corrected references, 12/227).

(2) Narrated via Jarir Ibn Abdullah by Muslim on solar eclipses (1017) and Ahmed (19156).

(3) See hadith narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari (3335) and Muslim (1677): “The first son of Adam takes a share of the guilt of every one who murders another because he was the initiator of murder.”

By the same token, those who mislead people share the responsibility of those who follow them, as the former are responsible for misleading others, and the latter are responsible for going astray. Allah says: "That they may bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge. Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear" (Holy Qur'an, 16:25); and "And those who disbelieve say to those who believe, 'Follow our way, and we will carry your sins'. But they will not carry anything of their sins. Indeed, they are liars. But they will surely carry their [own] burdens and [other] burdens along with their burdens, and they will surely be questioned on the Day of Resurrection about what they used to fabricate" (Holy Qur'an, 29:12-13). Those "[other] burdens" are committed by the people who follow, as Allah says: "Those who disbelieved and averted [others] from the way of Allah - We will increase them in punishment over [their] punishment for what corruption they were causing" (Holy Qur'an, 16:88).

The Holy Qur'an offers glimpses of arguments on the Day of Judgment between those who went astray and those who misled them. They blame each other, disavow each other, and call each other unbelievers. They even curse each other and try to blame their own sins on the others. When all their evil comes out, Allah condemns all of them to hell as punishment for what they did. They are like the people described in Al-Akhdari's poetry:⁽¹⁾

Not a single one of them shows obedience.

Let them all rot in hell with expedience.

Allah says:

- "[And they should consider that] when those who have been followed disassociate themselves from those who followed [them], and they [all] see the punishment, and cut off from them are the ties [of relationship], Those who followed will say: 'If only we had another turn [at worldly life] so we could disassociate ourselves from them as they have disassociated themselves from us'. Thus will Allah show them their deeds as regrets upon them. And they are never to emerge from the Fire" (Holy Qur'an, 2:166-167).
- "[Allah] will say: 'Enter among nations which had passed on before you of jinn and mankind into the Fire'. Every time a nation enters, it will curse its sister until, when they have all overtaken one another therein, the last of them will say about the first of them: 'Our Lord, these had misled us, so give them a double punishment of the Fire'. He will say: 'For each is double, but you do not know'. And the first of them will say to the last of them: 'Then you had not any favor over us, so taste the punishment for what you used to earn'" (Holy Qur'an, 7:38-39).

(1) See poem entitled *Al-Jawhara Al-Qudsiya* by Abu Zayd Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Said Al-Akhdari Al-Maliki.

- *“And those who disbelieve say: ‘We will never believe in this Holy Qur’an nor in that before it’. But if you could see when the wrongdoers are made to stand before their Lord, refuting each other’s words... Those who were oppressed will say to those who were arrogant: ‘If not for you, we would have been believers’. Those who were arrogant will say to those who were oppressed: ‘Did we avert you from guidance after it had come to you? Rather, you were criminals’ Those who were oppressed will say to those who were arrogant: ‘Rather, [it was your] conspiracy of night and day when you were ordering us to disbelieve in Allah and attribute to Him equals’. But they will [all] confide regret when they see the punishment; and We will put shackles on the necks of those who disbelieved. Will they be recompensed except for what they used to do?” (Holy Qur’an, 34:31-33).*

Conditions For Responsibility

In Islam, an individual is morally and religiously responsible if he/she is a mentally healthy able adult who has free choice. Many scholars of Islamic jurisprudence set the age of 15 as the minimum age for adulthood, while others set it higher. A mentally ill individual cannot be held accountable for his/her actions. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The pen has been lifted from three: the minor until he grows up, the insane until he comes back to his senses or recovers, and the sleeper until he wakes up.”⁽¹⁾ Physical ability is sometimes necessary for responsibility. For example, a person who is unable to perform a religious or moral duty due to health issues is not accountable for those actions. In the same fashion, a person might violate a rule when absolutely necessary or under duress. For example, Allah says: “He has only forbidden to you dead animals [that you did not kill to eat], blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 2:173). The verses that absolve people from sin when eating these kinds of forbidden food out of necessity are repeated four times in the Holy Qur’an, and then generalized as a principle: “He has explained in detail to you what He has forbidden you, excepting that to which you are compelled” (6:119). The last condition for responsibility is free choice. An individual who commits a sin under duress, even if it is as grave as renouncing faith, is not held accountable as long as the heart rejects it and feels at peace with faith. Allah says: “Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief ... except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith. But those who [willingly] open their breasts to disbelief, upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 16:106).

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Ahmed (sound, 24694), Abu Dawud on sanctions (4398), and Al-Nassa’i on divorce (3432).

Anyone who does not meet all four criteria is not morally responsible. However, we see some verses that metaphorically hold people accountable even though they do not meet the four criteria. Allah says: "And when the girl [who was] buried alive is asked - For what sin she was killed" (Holy Qur'an, 81:8-9).⁽¹⁾ In summary, only able adults in sound mental condition who have a choice are responsible, unless while they are asleep or temporarily unconscious.

Only Allah is beyond the issue of reasonability and accountability. He is the Creator of everything and the Lord of all existence. He rules as He pleases. The Holy Qur'an states that "He [Allah] is not questioned about what He does, but they will be questioned" (Holy Qur'an, 21:23), and "Say, 'Oh Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:26). Allah is the All Wise, and all His actions reflect divine wisdom.

On the Day of Judgment, people will be asked about everything they say and do in this world, whether it is good or evil, big or small. They will be asked about everything permissible or forbidden that they say or do, even if they are joking. They will be asked about everything they do to other people, including their close friends, relatives, acquaintances, complete strangers, and even their enemies. They will be asked about what they do by mistake and what they forget to do, what they do out of weakness or out of power. They will be asked about everything they are entrusted with, whether they are educated, illiterate, leaders, or followers.

Just as there is responsibility that comes with rewards and punishment, there is Allah's infinite mercy and grace. All wrong actions can be forgiven, as in the faithful's prayer: "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred" (Holy Qur'an, 2:286). The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Allah Almighty said 'I did' [in response to the prayer as in the previous verse]."⁽²⁾ Allah also says: "There is no blame upon you for that in which you have erred but [only for] what your hearts intended. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 33:5).

Islam establishes a clear distinction between intentional wrongdoing and unintentional mistakes. Allah says: "Never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake - then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation payment presented to the deceased's family [is required] unless they give [up their right as] *Zakat*. But if the deceased was from a people at war with you and he was a believer - then [only] the freeing of a

(1) In this particular verse, the issue is not whether the victim is being held accountable. Rather, it is the fact that the victim is being asked a question, hence the metaphor interpretation.

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Muslim on faith (126), Ahmed (2070) and Al-Tirmidhi in *Al-Tafsir* (2992).

believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty - then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find [one or cannot afford to buy one] - then [instead], a fast for two months consecutively, [seeking] acceptance of repentance from Allah. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 4:92). The message is quite clear: If a Muslim kills another by mistake, it is involuntary manslaughter, not murder, but the one who makes the mistake has to compensate the family of the victim. This compensation helps the victim's family and serves as a warning to others, but every unjustified killing comes with a penance as stated in these verses.⁽¹⁾

People are also forgiven for what they do due to lapses of memory. In his commentary on the faithful's prayer "Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred" (Holy Qur'an, 2:286), the Prophet (PBUH) says: "Allah has forgiven my Ummah for mistakes and forgetfulness, and what they are forced to do."⁽²⁾ Thus, if a Muslim forgets that he/she is fasting and eats or drinks, his/her fast is still valid. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "If any one of you forgetfully eats or drinks [while observing the fast] he should continue the fast, for Allah has fed him and given him a drink."⁽³⁾ In the story of Moses: "He [Moses] said: 'Did you see when we retired to the rock? Indeed, I [Moses's companion] forgot the fish. And none made me forget it except Satan - that I should mention it'" (Holy Qur'an, 18:63).

The same principle applies to oaths. Allah says: "Allah does not impose blame upon you for what is unintentional in your oaths, but He imposes blame upon you for what your hearts have earned. And Allah is Forgiving and Forbearing" (Holy Qur'an, 2:225); and "Allah will not impose blame upon you for what is meaning-

(1) Al-Jasas explains in *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān* (The Rulings of the Holy Qur'an) that "The killer's family is not responsible for the compensation. Rather, it is the killer who is personally responsible for it. If the family helps him out, this is only out of their kindness of their hearts. This is similar to poor people's rights to a share in the wealth of the rich. The rich do not have to give to charity because of sins or crimes they commit, but it is their religious duty. Allah also commands us to *Zakat* our kin in every way possible. Therefore, it is permissible for a family to share the burden of paying compensation if one of them kills someone by mistake. They can collect the compensation without causing undue harm to any of them, three or four dirhams each. If they were members of the court, their contributions can be taken from state funds, to be paid back over three years. Arab families traditionally shared compensation money before Islam, and their contributing was considered moral acts. The Prophet PBUH says, "I have come to complete good moral qualities." Therefore, it is commendable that family members would contribute to the compensation if one of them was engaged in involuntary manslaughter." In addition to Al-Jasas's argument, I would like to note that the tribes or communities are in a way responsible for the behavior of their members. It is their responsibility to raise them in ways that does not empower or embolden them to make such mistakes. Thus, their contributing to compensations is part of their moral responsibility.

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ibn Majah on divorce (2045), Ibn Hibban (7219), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (2137), and Al-Hakim on divorce (corrected; 2/198), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (1664).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on fasting (1933), Muslims also on fasting (1155), and Ahmed (9136).

less in your oaths, but He will impose blame upon you for [breaking] what you intended of oaths” (Holy Qur’an, 5:89). Accordingly, scholars of Islamic jurisprudence distinguish three types of oaths: (a) meaningless oaths, which lack the intention of making an oath, for example if uttered when angry; (b) intentional oaths, which if broken, one has to either feed 10 poor people or fast for three days if one cannot afford feeding 10 poor people; and (3) false oaths, which are intended to mislead. This last kind is a grave sin: “Indeed, those who exchange the covenant of Allah and their [own] oaths for a small price will have no share in the Hereafter, and Allah will not speak to them or look at them on the Day of Resurrection, nor will He purify them; and they will have a painful punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 3:77).

In summary, people are asked on the Day of Judgment about everything they have ever done in their lives, but reward and punishment apply only to moral and immoral actions, respectively. As long as people meet the criteria for accountability, their actions fall within three categories: (a) moral duties and commendable actions; (b) forbidden sins and undesirable actions; and (c) allowed actions that do not call for reward or punishment. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “One’s feet will not move on the Day of Resurrection before he is asked about his life, and how he spent it; his youth, how he wore it out; his wealth, how he earned it and how he spent it; and his knowledge, how he used it.”⁽¹⁾ People are asked about everything, but the Prophet (PBUH) specifies those four because of the moral responsibility associated with them. For example, youth is the most important stage of life between the two phases of weakness: “Allah is the one who created you from weakness, then made after weakness strength, then made after strength weakness and white hair. He creates what He wills” (Holy Qur’an, 30:54).

On Justice And Responsibility

Being accountable before Allah is quite different from being accountable before people. Allah’s rewards and punishment are comprehensive, meticulous, and swift: “Allah is swift in [taking] account” (Holy Qur’an, 3:19). The Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah repeatedly assert that Allah’s rewards and punishment are absolutely fair and generous. Allah says: “Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have 10 times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof; and they will not be wronged” (Holy Qur’an, 6:160). Allah counts each evil deed as only one, but He treats every good one as 10. He even multiplies the good deeds 10 times or 700

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Tirmidhi on Judgment Day (2416), Al-Bazzar (1435), Abu Yala (5271), and Al-Albani in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (128).

times if He so chooses. There are no limits to His generosity, and many people are completely forgiven and absolved of all sin. Allah says: “The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is 100 grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing. Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders [of it] or [other] injury will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve” (Holy Qur’an, 2:261-262); and “Indeed, Allah does not do injustice, [even] as much as an atom’s weight; while if there is a good deed, He multiplies it and gives from Himself a great reward” (Holy Qur’an, 4:40).

The nature of a reward depends upon the nature of the action. Some actions are rewarded more than others, such as all kinds of patience: patience in obeying Allah, patience in avoiding what Allah has forbidden, patience during hardships, and patience with the pains of calling on people to heed Allah’s call. Some actions are even rewarded without accounts: “Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account” (Holy Qur’an, 39:10). The Prophet (PBUH) tells of people who go to heaven without any questioning, for Allah is pleased with them, and they are pleased with Him.⁽¹⁾

People are rewarded in the afterlife for their actions on earth and also for the effects of their actions that continue after their death. Allah says: “Indeed, it is We who bring the dead to life and record what they have put forth and what they left behind, and all things We have enumerated in a clear register” (Holy Qur’an, 36:12). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “When people die, all their good deeds come to an end except for three: On-going *Zakat*, useful knowledge, and righteous children who pray for them.”⁽²⁾ On-going *Zakat* includes charitable works that continue after one’s death, such as trees that continue to produce fruit, wells that people continue to drink from, mosques that people continue to pray in, schools that continue to offer education, and so on and so forth. Useful knowledge includes every aspect of knowledge people produce in their lives and others continue to use to learn or develop further knowledge. Knowledge that people are rewarded for after their death include books, methods, research, and wisdom. Prayers by faithful children also help the deceased parents because the children’s faith and righteousness are the outcome of their parents’ work: “And [there is a share for] those who came after them, saying, ‘Our Lord, forgive us and our brothers who preceded us in faith and put not in our hearts [any] resentment toward those who have believed’” (Holy Qur’an, 59:10). Allah tells us that asking Him to forgive the

(1) See hadith narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari on medicine (5705) and Muslim on faith (220).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on wills and living testaments (1631), Ahmed (8844), Al-Tirmidhi on rulings (1376), and Al-Nassa’i on wills (3651).

faithful who departed is accepted, as He reminds us of Abraham who asked Allah: "Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers the Day the account is established" (Holy Qur'an, 14:41).

Allah's mercy is infinite, and on the Day of Judgment, He will forgive many people. For example, Allah has granted faithful men to be forgiven along with the righteous among their families and descendants, so that they will be together in heaven. Allah says:

- *"And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith - We will join with them their descendants, and We will not deprive them of anything of their deeds. Every person, for what he earned, is retained" (Holy Qur'an, 52:21).*
- *"That is the bounty of Allah which He gives to whom He wills, and Allah is the possessor of great bounty" (Holy Qur'an, 57:21; 62:4).*
- *"That Allah may reward them [according to] the best of what they did and increase them from His bounty. And Allah gives provision to whom He wills without account" (Holy Qur'an, 24:38).*
- *"Indeed, those who recite the Book of Allah and establish prayer and spend [in His cause] out of what We have provided them, secretly and publicly, [can] expect a profit that will never perish - That He may give them in full their rewards and increase for them of His bounty. Indeed, He is Forgiving and Appreciative" (Holy Qur'an, 35:29-30).*

No matter how many sins one commits in this life, Allah's mercy encompasses all, for He accepts good deeds no matter how few or insignificant they may seem to us. Allah has also granted the faithful the possibility of interceding on behalf of other faithful people whose good deeds have fallen short. Allah says:

- *"And He answers [the supplication of] those who have believed and done righteous deeds and increases [for] them from His bounty" (Holy Qur'an, 42:26).*
- *"There will not benefit them [the unbelievers] the intercession of [any] intercessors" (Holy Qur'an, 74:48).*
- *"Who is it that can intercede with Him except by His permission?" (Holy Qur'an, 2:255).*
- *"They cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves" (Holy Qur'an, 21:28).*
- *"For the wrongdoers there will be no devoted friend and no intercessor [who is] obeyed" (Holy Qur'an, 40:18).*

- *"Now we [the unbelievers] have no intercessors - And not a devoted friend" (Holy Qur'an, 26:100-101).*
- *"How many angels there are in heaven whose intercession will not avail at all except [only] after Allah has permitted [it] to whom He wills and approves" (Holy Qur'an, 53:26).*
- *"They cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves" (Holy Qur'an, 21:28).*

Prophets intercede on behalf of those who followed them in life, especially Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) who is given the greatest intercession on behalf of all people of faith.⁽¹⁾ Intercession is Allah's gift that nobody has the right to object to or turn down. Allah says: "My punishment, I afflict with it whomever I will, but My mercy encompasses all things" (Holy Qur'an, 7:156). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Allah's mercy precedes His wrath."⁽²⁾ Allah also says: "[Oh Mohammed], inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful. And that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment" (Holy Qur'an, 15:49-50). As with many verses that mention Allah's mercy and punishment, we always see mercy described as an inherent divine attribute, whereas punishment is only a divine action.

Allah's mercy also applies to those who disbelieve, for He does not send down His punishment immediately, but He gives them every possible opportunity to repent. Allah even orders the angels to ask Him to forgive people: "Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], 'Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire. Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual residence which You have promised them and whoever was righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. And protect them from the evil consequences [of their deeds]. And he whom You protect from evil consequences that Day - You will have given him mercy. And that is the great attainment'" (Holy Qur'an, 40:7-9). The faithful benefit from these prayers as a reward for their faith, regardless of their actions.

Allah's mercy does not contradict the concept of divine justice, because nobody is treated unfairly and nobody is held accountable for the actions of others. Allah

(1) See hadith narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari on monotheism (7510) and Muslim on faith (193).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (7422) and Muslim on repentance (2751).

says: "He who does of righteous deeds while he is a believer - he will neither fear injustice nor deprivation" (Holy Qur'an, 20:112). Injustice here is for people to be held responsible and punished for someone else's actions, whereas deprivation is not to be rewarded for one's good actions. The issue of justice is clearly resolved in the verses:

- *"There is not for man except that [good] for which he strives - And that his effort is going to be seen - Then he will be recompensed for it with the fullest recompense" (Holy Qur'an, 53:39-41).*
- *"Whoever does righteousness - it is for his [own] soul; and whoever does evil [does so] against it. And your Lord is not ever unjust to [His] servants" (Holy Qur'an, 41:46).*
- *"And their Lord responded to them: 'Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:195).*

The other part of the argument is addressed in the following verses:

- *"And every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (Holy Qur'an, 6:164).*
- *"And We place the scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection, so no soul will be treated unjustly at all. And if there is [even] the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it forth. And sufficient are We as an accountant" (Holy Qur'an, 21:47).*

Since every individual is rewarded fairly without having to be held responsible for the actions of others, justice is achieved. If Allah decides to grant some people additional rewards out of His infinite generosity, that is His decision and it does not affect anyone else, as explained in: "Whatever Allah grants to people of mercy - none can withhold it" (Holy Qur'an, 35:2); and "Say, 'Oh My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:53).

We have already established that responsibility is by definition personal, but people will be held responsible for the actions of those they are in charge of. Parents are religiously, morally, and legally responsible for the actions of their children. Allah says: "Oh you who have believed, protect yourselves and your families from a Fire whose fuel is people and stones" (Holy Qur'an, 66:6). The family is an integral whole whose members share responsibility, with the father serving as its head. Allah says: "Men are in charge of women by [right of] what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth" (Holy Qur'an, 4:34). Thus, men are responsible for the well-being of

their families, but this responsibility does not give them the right to act as tyrants or to undermine the status of women.

Islam calls for family relationships built on shared efforts, especially in our time and age when women are better educated and even serve the community in leadership positions. The responsibility we are talking about here is the father's financial responsibility to maintain the well-being of his family. There is also the parents' shared responsibility to raise their children and offer them good academic, religious, cultural, physical, and social education. Allah says: "Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the father is the mother's provision and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you, as long as you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do" (Holy Qur'an, 2:233).

The Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah has many hadiths that tell people about the best practices in parenting. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) says: "Command your children to perform their prayers when they are seven years old, and hit them for not offering it when they are 10, and do not let (boys and girls) sleep together."⁽¹⁾ Parents are responsible for teaching their children the good manners that are appropriate for every age.

Responsibility also extends beyond the family. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "You are all guardians and are responsible for your subjects. A ruler is a guardian of his subjects; a man is a guardian of his family; A woman in her husband's house is a guardian and is responsible for her subjects; A servant is responsible for his master's property."⁽²⁾ This hadith makes everyone in the family responsible, even the servants, and holds them accountable.

Unfortunately, we often see people who do not fulfill their share of responsibility. People want to blame their political leaders, who in turn blame the people, even though the hadith makes it clear that everyone is responsible, starting with community leaders. Community leaders are responsible for establishing justice. They are accountable before Allah and the people. Allah will ask them, and people

(1) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (sound; 6756), Abu Dawud (495), Al-Darqutni (1/230), Al-Bayhaqi (2/229), all three on prayers, and Al-Albani in *Irwa' Al-Ghalil* (corrected; 298).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari on lending money (2409) and Muslim on leadership (1829).

have the right to ask them and receive answers. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah will ask everyone for what they were entrusted with: Did they preserve or waste it?”⁽¹⁾

Consequences are dependent on responsibility. This is why Omar said: “Hold yourselves accountable before you are held accountable before Allah.”⁽²⁾ Omar Ibn Abdel Aziz once said: “I found myself in charge of this Ummah with all its people of different colors. I remembered those who were poor, lost, or imprisoned in the far edges of the lands. I realized that I was responsible for all of them before Allah and His Prophet (PBUH). I became scared that no excuse would save me.”⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Nassa'i in *Al-Kubrā* on marriage (9129), Abu Awana on legal rulings (7036), Ibn Hibban on biographies (4492), Al-Hafidh in *Al-Fath* (corrected; 13/113), and Al-Albani in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* (corrected; 271).

(2) Narrated by Ibn Abi Shayba in his book on asceticism (35600).

(3) Narrated by Abu Yusuf on taxation, 26.

3.3 Punishment

In Islam, every moral or immoral action has consequences in terms of reward and punishment. In this world, these consequences can be legal, material, social, or emotional. There are also consequences in the afterlife. In this section, I discuss the different kinds of consequences associated with moral and immoral actions.

Moral Consequences

These type of consequences are what we often call fate. It includes forms of reward and punishment that occur as part of the universal system of causality. Allah says: “But you will never find in the way of Allah any change, and you will never find in the way of Allah any alteration” (Holy Qur’an, 35:43). For example, Allah has made pleasant life a reward for those who believe and follow His true path. He also made hardship and instability a punishment for those who disbelieve and refuse to follow the true path.

This is the law that Allah explained to Adam and his wife when they were sent down to Earth: “[Allah] said: ‘Descend from Paradise - all, [your descendants] being enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]. And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind’” (Holy Qur’an, 20:123-124). Noah reminded his people of this law when they refused to accept his call: “And I said, ‘Ask forgiveness of your Lord. Indeed, He is ever a Perpetual Forgiver. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in [continuing] showers - And give you increase in wealth and children, and provide for you gardens, and provide for you rivers’” (Holy Qur’an, 70:10-12). The Prophet Houd also reminded his people of this law when they refused to believe him, thinking they were too powerful to be punished: “Oh my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord and then repent to Him. He will send [rain from] the sky upon you in showers and increase you in strength [added] to your strength. And do not turn away, [being] criminals” (Holy Qur’an, 11:52). Every prophet was sent to his people to remind them of this universal law: Those who believe are rewarded with the good things in this world and the afterlife, and those do refuse to believe are punished.

The Holy Qur’an repeatedly reminds us that rewards are for good deeds and punishment is for evil deeds. Regarding rewards, Allah says:

- *“Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 16:97).*

- *"If only the people of the cities had believed and feared Allah, We would have opened upon them blessings from the heaven and the earth; but they denied [the messengers], so We seized them for what they were earning" (Holy Qur'an, 7:96).*
- *"[Allah revealed] that if they had remained straight on the way, We would have given them abundant provision" (Holy Qur'an, 72:16).*
- *"If only they [the People of the Book] upheld [the law of] the Torah, the Gospel, and what has been revealed to them from their Lord, they would have consumed [provision] from above them and from beneath their feet. Among them are a moderate community, but many of them – evil is that which they do" (Holy Qur'an, 5:66).*
- *"Whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out - And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent [...] Whoever fears Allah - He will make for him of his matter ease" (Holy Qur'an, 65:2-4).*

Just as there are rewards in this world and the hereafter for good actions, there is punishment for evil deeds, both in this world and in the hereafter as well. Allah says:

- *"And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind" (Holy Qur'an, 20: 124).*
- *"Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned so He may let them taste part of [the consequence of] what they have done that perhaps they will return [to righteousness]" (Holy Qur'an, 30:41).*
- *"Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing" (Holy Qur'an 16:112).*

These verses, and many others, teach us that safety, abundance, and happiness come with faith, virtue, and staying on the true path, whereas poverty, fear, and humiliation come from disbelieving, injustice, and the pursuit of forbidden pleasures.

How do these consequences materialize? For sure, this is not about miracles or supernatural acts, as some might believe. These consequences materialize according to the natural laws of the universe. The faithful are the ones who do their best

at everything they do. They are also the ones who use their time efficiently and productively and make sure to benefit others, collaborate with them, and protect them. These virtues can only be found among faithful people, and they have direct consequences in life. Their good deeds bring them a pleasant life, blessings, and joy. Those who do not believe in Allah waste their energy in their pursuit of forbidden pleasures, and their conscience becomes corrupt. Their moral corruption negatively reflects their lives and, as a result, they are deprived of peace and joy. Allah says: "Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favors of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing" (Holy Qur'an, 16:112). In the story of Sheba, we learn that "There was for [the tribe of] Saba' [Sheba] in their dwelling place a sign: two [fields of] gardens on the right and on the left. [They were told], 'Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [have you], and a forgiving Lord'. But they turned away [refusing], so We sent upon them the flood of the dam, and We replaced their two [fields of] gardens with gardens of bitter fruit, tamarisks and something of sparse lote trees. [By] that We repaid them because they disbelieved. And do We [thus] repay except the ungrateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 34:15-17).

Legal Sanctions

The legal type of consequence involves penalties incurred by those representing moral authority, such as judges and rulers. While it is mostly in the form of punishments for moral infractions and illegal actions, it rarely involves rewards for good actions. This is the nature of law; it typically deals with those who break it rather than those who abide by it. The main purpose of the law is to protect against those who spread corruption and injustice, use physical force to seize others' properties, or commit other crimes. It also punishes those who benefit from corrupt people or rulers to inflict injustice. This is an age-old problem, as wrongdoers seek the support of other wrongdoers until Allah punishes them all together. Allah says: "Fear a trial which will not strike those who have wronged among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty" (Holy Qur'an, 8:25).

Islamic jurisprudence specifies the sanctions for many types of crimes that threaten social structure, such as theft, aggravated robbery, adultery, premeditated murder, and slander. The Holy Qur'an states a few specific sanctions. For example, "[As for] the thief, the male and the female, amputate their hands in recompense for what they committed as a deterrent [punishment] from Allah. And Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 5:38).

For aggravated robbery and grand theft, the punishment is stated in the verse: "Indeed, the penalty for those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and

strive upon earth [to cause] corruption is none but that they be killed or crucified, or that their hands and feet be cut off from opposite sides, or that they be exiled from the land. That is for them a disgrace in this world; and for them in the Hereafter is a great punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 5:33).

Adultery is punished in accordance with the verse: “The woman or man found guilty of forbidden sexual intercourse - lash each one of them with 100 lashes, and do not be overtaken by pity for them in the religion of Allah, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of the believers witness their punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 24:2). There is some discussion in the literature on Sunnah that mentions stoning as a penalty for adultery, but this is quite a controversial issue that requires more discussion that we have room for here.

For slander, the punishment is specified in: “Those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with 80 lashes and do not accept from them testimony ever after. And those are the defiantly disobedient - Except for those who repent thereafter and reform, for indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 24:4-5).

Premeditated murder is punished by the death penalty according to the verse: “There is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, Oh you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 2:179). There are of course many crimes that the Holy Qur’an does not specify a penalty for, such as drinking alcohol, and these are left for scholars of jurisprudence to determine, state in the law, and change as necessary.

The Relationship Between Sanctions In The Holy Qur’an And Ethics

The harsh sanctions in Islamic jurisprudence are all closely tied to ethics. For example, the penalty for adultery aims to be a deterrent to others, hence the public nature of the penalty. Adultery is an immoral act that can lead to many other immoral acts. It leads to hatred, social discord, undetermined fatherhood, and even murder. Almost all religions see it as a grave and shameful sin. The penalty for theft is intended to serve as a deterrent and to protect people and their properties. Anyone who steals wrongs him/herself before wronging others, because they become used to stealing rather than earning a living through permissible means. They wrong others by unjustly taking away what they have worked hard to earn. The punishment is quite harsh because the crime goes against sound instincts that abhor injustice. The severe punishment also helps protect moral values, such as justice and the respect of others’ rights and properties. Slander is a grave offense because it amounts to injustice against human dignity. Slander negatively affects the victim’s reputation and honor. It also spreads rumor, suspicion, and even threatens the integrity of the family. The penalty not only serves as a deterrent,

but it also makes sure the offence is not repeated because anyone convicted of slander cannot serve as a witness unless he/she changes their ways.

Just as these penalties are harsh, the bar for conviction is quite high, to the point that it is very difficult to secure a conviction. For example, conviction for adultery requires four impeccable witnesses who testify to having witnessed the act directly. This bar is so high that it cannot be achieved without the use of tricks that are not permissible as ways to collect evidence, such as spying. If fact, adultery cannot be proven unless it has been committed in public, which is quite rare. There have been only four cases in Islamic history where the penalty for adultery was carried out, and in all four cases it was the adulterers who came out willingly and asked to be punished to be purified.

Penances are different kinds of sanctions that are specified in Islam, but they are less severe than the ones we have just discussed, and they typically apply in cases where people wrong themselves rather than the community. Examples of such offenses include breaking an oath, having sexual intercourse with a spouse during the day in Ramadan, treating one's wife as a mother, and involuntary manslaughter. Other penalties are not specified in the Holy Qur'an, but are left for scholars who represent the community to determine. These include offenses such as not paying child support, having a monopoly over critical commodities such as food, and price gouging.

The Holy Qur'an also mentions penalties for extravagant communities that live in luxury to the point where their morality is lost and their social fabric disintegrates, leading to their destruction. Allah says: "When We intend to destroy a city, We command its affluent but they defiantly disobey therein; so the word comes into effect upon it, and We destroy it with [complete] destruction" (Holy Qur'an, 17:16). The destruction described in this verse does not have to be material, such as the destruction of the People of Lot. It can take different forms other than devastation, as it could be the loss of freedom and sovereignty, humiliation at the hands of enemies, or social unrest. It could also mean the destruction of economic resources, as in the case of the people of Sheba: "[By] that We repaid them because they disbelieved. And do We [thus] repay except the ungrateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 34:17).

The greatest penalty is indeed the one in the afterlife, when one pays for all wrongdoing against oneself and the community. This is the punishment Allah has in store for those who disbelieve and for those who disobey without repenting. Those who repent, Allah forgives: "Those who do not invoke with Allah another deity or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed], except by right, and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse. And whoever should do that will meet a penalty. Multiplied for him is the punishment on the Day of Resurrection, and

he will abide therein humiliated - Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 25:68-70). Allah has called on all the faithful to repent: “Turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed” (Holy Qur’an, 24:31).

The faithful are also forgiven if they do not commit the deadly sins for fear of Allah: “If you avoid the major sins which you are forbidden, We will remove from you your lesser sins and admit you to a noble entrance [into Paradise]” (Holy Qur’an, 4:31). Allah describes those who deserve His paradise in the verses: “To Allah belongs whatever is in heaven and whatever is in the earth - that He may recompense those who do evil with [the penalty of] what they have done and recompense those who do good with the best [reward] - Those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, only [committing] slight ones. Indeed, your Lord is vast in forgiveness. He was most knowing of you when He produced you from the earth and when you were fetuses in the wombs of your mothers. So do not claim yourselves to be pure; He is most knowing of who fears Him” (Holy Qur’an, 53:31-32); and “And those who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive” (Holy Qur’an, 42:37).

It is Allah who created people, and He knows best about their weaknesses. Yet, every move and every word are recorded whether they are visible or mere thoughts. Allah says:

- *“Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak” (Holy Qur’an, 4:28).*
- *“Do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes, [We do], and Our messengers are with them recording” (Holy Qur’an, 43:80); “Man does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record]” (Holy Qur’an, 50:18).*
- *“Indeed, [appointed] over you are keepers - Noble and recording; They know whatever you do” (Holy Qur’an, 82:10-12).*
- *“The record [of deeds] will be placed [open], and you will see the criminals fearful of that within it, and they will say, ‘Oh, woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great except that it has enumerated it?’ And they will find what they did present [before them]. And your Lord does injustice to no one” (Holy Qur’an, 18:49).*

The penalties we have discussed thus far are for actions that have displeased Allah by the people whom He would love to see obeying, yet they have persisted in their sins. Allah says, “Say, ‘Oh My servants, who have transgressed against them-

selves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 39:53). There are also rewards for every act of obedience, big or small: “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it” (Holy Qur’an, 99:7-8). Luqman advises his son: “Oh my son, indeed if wrong should be the weight of a mustard seed and should be within a rock or [anywhere] in heaven or on earth, Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted” (Holy Qur’an, 31:16).

Finally, Allah’s rewards and punishment do not distinguish between men and women. Allah says: “And their Lord responded to them: ‘Never will I allow to be lost the work of [any] worker among you, whether male or female; you are of one another. So those who emigrated or were evicted from their homes or were harmed in My cause or fought or were killed - I will surely remove from them their misdeeds, and I will surely admit them to gardens beneath which rivers flow as reward from Allah, and Allah has with Him the best reward’” (Holy Qur’an, 3:195).

Every good deed or word is rewarded, whether it is required, expected, Sunnah, or something else. Nothing is ever lost or forgotten. Allah says: “Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting” (Holy Qur’an, 16:96); and “whatever good you [believers] spend is for yourselves, and you do not spend except seeking the countenance of Allah. And whatever you spend of good - it will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged” (Holy Qur’an, 2:272).

As mentioned earlier, Allah is just and generous. Every evil deed is counted as one, but a good deed is multiplied by 10, and sometimes 700. Allah says:

- *“Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have 10 times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof; and they will not be wronged” (Holy Qur’an, 6:160).*
- *“The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is 100 grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing” (Holy Qur’an, 2:261).*
- *“The example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing” (Holy Qur’an, 2:265).*

Good deeds are counted as such, even if they are not manifested. It is enough for one to have the sincere intention to do a good deed to have it counted. Good deeds are even counted when they are mistakenly applied, such as giving charity to a thief, a prostitute, or a rich person. These charities are still accepted and everyone involved benefits from it. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Perhaps a charity would encourage a thief or a prostitute to repent, or a rich person to learn to give to charity.”⁽¹⁾

The ultimate reward for good deeds is heaven, which is not about palaces, trees, good food, pure water, and virgins. This heaven has physical pleasures such that no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human mind has ever imagined. Allah describes heaven in many verses, including the following: “For them who have done good is the best [reward] and much more” (Holy Qur’an, 10:26). The “best reward” in this context is heaven, while what is “much more” is seeing Allah and enjoying a kind of bliss that humanity has not experienced. In other contexts, Allah says: “... and approval from Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 3:15); “but approval from Allah is greater” (Holy Qur’an, 9:72); and “[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, Looking at their Lord” (Holy Qur’an, 75:22-23).”

We see from the above excerpts that Dr. Draz builds his Qur’anic moral theory on five principles. One of them is consequences (rewards and punishment), which he defines as a “legal response to the actions of those subject to the law. This response can be moral, legal, or divine.”⁽²⁾ The moral consequences take the form of feelings of happiness or pain, triggered by fulfilling or failing to fulfill one’s moral duties. Every moral or immoral behavior results in an emotional state that befits the action. Such emotional states include a sense of satisfaction for succeeding to act morally, and a sense of regret for failing to act morally. These emotional states are attendant upon the issue of rewards and punishments. This is very similar to human physiology, since one’s physical condition helps to maintain health, or causes sickness, regardless of one’s expectations. Dr. Draz explains: “The joy or pain we feel after doing moral or immoral actions are natural reactions that stem from our conscience, independent of any legal consequences. In other words, our feelings mirror our moral ideals. When our actions reflect our moral ideals, we experience inner peace, but if our actions contradict those ideals, we experience pain and weakness.”⁽³⁾

Legal consequences are mostly concerned with punishments for immoral acts. The Islamic legal system, just like all other legal systems, is more concerned with

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (1421) and Muslim, both on *Zakat*.

(2) *Dustūr Al-Akhlāq fī Al-Qur’ān* (The Moral World of the Qur’an), Mohammed Abdullah Draz, translated by Abd Al-Sabur Shahin, 245.

(3) *Ibid*, 249.

penalties rather than rewards, because law abiding members of the community enjoy the safety, peace, protection, and social approval provided by law.

Dr. Draz distinguishes two types of sanctions in Islamic jurisprudence. The first includes the penalties stated in the Holy Qur'an for a limited number of offenses, such as robbery, theft, adultery, and defamation. The other type involves crimes whose penalties are left for judges and the law. The penalties in the first category are spelled out in terms of quality and quantity, and they are inflicted regardless of extraneous factors, such as the condition of the perpetrator, the feelings of the victims, or whether it is a first offense. In other words, once authorities are aware of the crime and conviction is secured, the penalty is mandatory and irrevocable. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Pardon matters that may deserve a punishment before you bring them to my attention, for the punishment of whatever is brought to my attention is binding."⁽¹⁾

Dr. Draz comments on contemporary views on these penalties: "The modern conscience is disturbed by these severe punishments, which Islam uses to treat pathological behavior and some crimes."⁽²⁾ Dr. Draz attributes this attitude to a conflict between our feelings toward the law that was violated, and the individual who violated it. We do not have the same attitude when inflicting punishment on our enemies who try to usurp our land, even when we kill those enemies. It is our survival instinct that inhibits our feelings for harmony and human fraternity. He writes: "This Ummah does not lack kindness, mercy, or humanity. However, we have to stop pretending to be delicate and abide by the law following Allah's commandment: 'Do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah' (Holy Qur'an, 24:2). The severity of these punishments is only apparent and theoretical, as the harsher the penalty, the less often it is actually inflicted. The harshness of the punishment makes the crime less appealing."⁽³⁾ As for all other crimes, the Holy Qur'an does not specify any penalties, and they are open for scholars and legal experts to determine their penalties, the conditions for pardoning, and what extraneous factors to take into consideration.

Dr. Draz then compares the Islamic legal system to those of Judaism and Christianity. He concludes that the concept of morality as a goal in its own right rarely comes up in the Old Testament. He comments that: "We do not see any reference to the afterlife in the religious traditions between Adam and Moses. In fact, the afterlife does not seem to have a place in these religions."⁽⁴⁾ The New Testament on

(1) Narrated via Ibn Amr by Al-Darqutni (3196) and Al-Hakim (4/383), both on legal penalties.

(2) Ibid, 266.

(3) Ibid, 268.

(4) Ibid, 280.

the other hand “always places hope in the afterlife, except in one case.”⁽¹⁾

The Islamic legal theory “is based on different principles, but they all fall into three categories: theoretical considerations, the surrounding conditions, and the consequences of action.”⁽²⁾ The theoretical considerations involve philosophical arguments that associate responsibility to moral values. These moral values can be positive, thus requiring doing certain moral actions, or negative, thus requiring refraining from immoral actions. These are objective values, such as justice vs. injustice, and the truth vs. falsehood,⁽³⁾ as seen in the verse: “Thus Allah presents [the example of] truth and falsehood. As for the foam, it vanishes, [being] cast off; but as for that which benefits the people, it remains on the earth. Thus does Allah present examples” (Holy Qur’an, 13:17).

The surrounding conditions concern the phase that precedes sentencing and carrying out penalties. They conditions are manifested in “the feelings we experience when we think that others think positively or negatively about us.”⁽⁴⁾ The Holy Qur’an also includes the feeling of being in the company of the angel and Allah’s seeing everything we do: “Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge” (Holy Qur’an, 65:12).

Finally, there are the consequences of one’s actions. This last category is the one discussed least in the Holy Qur’an, as only a handful of verses mention natural rewards and punishments, such as health and sickness. “Thus, moral life is enriched by the introduction of the two other elements that make natural sanctions less prominent.”⁽⁵⁾ As for divine punishments and rewards, we see that “the Torah limits the promised happiness to this world, while the Bible limits it almost exclusively to the afterlife. Islam combines both in a balanced way.”⁽⁶⁾ Allah says: “Among the people are those who say: ‘Our Lord, give us in this world’, and they will have in the Hereafter no share. But among them are those who say: ‘Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire’. Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account” (Holy Qur’an, 2:200-202); and “Do you believe in part of the Scripture and disbelieve in part? Then what is the recompense for those who do that among you except disgrace in worldly life; and on the Day of Resurrection they will be sent back to the severest of punishment. And Allah is not unaware of what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 2:85).

(1) Ibid, 281-282.

(2) Ibid, 248.

(3) Ibid, 248.

(4) Ibid, 320.

(5) Ibid, 336-337.

(6) Ibid, 343.

3.4 Intentions And Motives

Islam does not assess the value of actions by their size, number, participants, expenses, or aesthetics. Many people cannot think beyond these attributes, because this is how they evaluate the material benefits of actions, and how these actions secure material pleasures. Allah, on the other hand, only assesses actions according to the intentions and motives that bring them about. He rewards actions that are performed in His name and for His sake.

Every good deed, whether individual or collective, and whether it aims to achieve worldly or religious goals, has to be sincerely intended to serve Allah. These actions are accepted only if the agent is an adult who is in good mental condition. Those with mental illnesses are not responsible for their intentions. Children are rewarded for their good deeds, but are not held responsible for their mistakes until they become adults. This is why children spend their time learning manners and religion before they become accountable for their actions. Saleh Ibn Abd Al-Quddous writes:

Learning manners helps when children are small.

But it is too late when they are adults and tall.

Green branches can be straightened and they would.

But never once they harden into wood.

Intention is the determination of the heart. It might be accompanied with thoughts and internal dialogue, but they are not the same thing as determination. It is by Allah's grace that He does not hold us accountable for those mere thoughts. The Prophet says: "Allah has forgiven my community for what comes to their mind, so long as they do not act or speak words to that effect."⁽¹⁾ All sorts of thoughts cross our minds every day, and many of them are about forbidden things. Thanks to Allah's grace, these thoughts are not counted against us, but people are better off occupying themselves with good thoughts.

Intentions have to be sincere, in the sense of being free from personal desires and material pleasures. For an action to be purely dedicated to Allah, one cannot hope to achieve other goals as well. This is why sincerity is a defining criteria of those who truly worship Allah: "They [the People of the Book] were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give *Zakat*" (Holy Qur'an, 98:5). People can consider their deeds good as they please, but these deeds are accepted only if they are free from hypocrisy and pretentiousness. Allah says: "Indeed, the hypocrites

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on divorce (5269) and Muslim on faith (127).

[think to] deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. And when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily, showing [themselves to] the people and not remembering Allah except a little" (Holy Qur'an, 4:142).

By the same token, acts of worship, such as prayers and giving to *Zakat*, are accepted only if they are free from hypocrisy. Compare Allah's words: "The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like a seed [of grain] which grows seven spikes; in each spike is 100 grains. And Allah multiplies [His reward] for whom He wills. And Allah is all-Encompassing and Knowing" (Holy Qur'an, 2:261) to "And the example of those who spend their wealth seeking means to the approval of Allah and assuring [reward for] themselves is like a garden on high ground which is hit by a downpour - so it yields its fruits in double. And [even] if it is not hit by a downpour, then a drizzle [is sufficient]. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing" (Holy Qur'an, 2:165).

Allah condemns the hypocrites who perform their acts of worship to gain social recognition and people's approval: "What prevents their expenditures from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger and that they come not to prayer except while they are lazy and that they do not spend except while they are unwilling" (Holy Qur'an, 9:54). Acts of worship are accepted only if they are sincere: "Say, 'Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. And this I have been commanded and I am the first [among you] of the Muslims'; and "Say, 'Is it other than Allah I should desire as a lord while He is the Lord of all things?'" (Holy Qur'an, 6:162-164).

The acts Allah has ordered the faithful to perform are not mechanical or merely ritualistic. Rather, the faithful have to put their hearts in their actions. This is a recurrent theme in the Holy Qur'an that we see in many verses, such as:

- *"[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed" (Holy Qur'an, 67:2).*
- *"And it is He who created the heavens and the earth in six days - and His Throne had been upon water - that He might test you as to which of you is best in deed" (Holy Qur'an, 11:7).*
- *"Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth adornment for it that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed" (Holy Qur'an, 18:7).*

In these verses and many others, Allah explains the motivation for creating the heavens and the earth, life and death, and all creatures: to test people and see who does their best. The test here is to choose between two good things in order to achieve human perfection. Allah also says:

- *"And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord" (Holy Qur'an, 39:55).*
- *"Who listen to speech and follow the best of it. Those are the ones Allah has guided, and those are people of understanding" (Holy Qur'an, 39:18).*
- *"Call [on The People of the Book] to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 16:125).*
- *"And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is best" (Holy Qur'an, 41:34).*
- *"Repel, by [means of] what is best, [their] evil. We are most knowing of what they describe." (Holy Qur'an, 23:96).*
- *"And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 5:152; 17:34).*
- *"And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces [dissension] among them. Indeed Satan is ever, to mankind, a clear enemy" (Holy Qur'an, 17:53)*

In short, the Holy Qur'an urges people to always be sincere and to do their very best, whether they are performing acts of worship, interacting with other people, or even interacting with inanimate objects.

What does it mean to do one's very best? Abu Ali Ibn Iyad, a Sufi Imam (d. 803), was asked this question, and he answered thus: "The best actions are the most sincere and most accurate, and if it does not meet either condition, it is not accepted. For an action to be sincere, it has to be dedicated to Allah alone, and to be accurate, it has to follow the Prophet's (PBUH) Sunnah."⁽¹⁾ In other words, for an action to follow the Sunnah, it has to be permissible in Islamic jurisprudence rather than a deviation from the teachings of the religion. Such deviations as innovating new acts of worship are unacceptable. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "If anybody introduces a religious practice which we do not do, it will be rejected"⁽²⁾ and in another version "Anyone who engages in a religious practice different from ours, it will be rejected."⁽³⁾ He also says: "The truest word is the Book of Allah and the best guidance is that of Mohammed. The worst of things are those that are newly innovated; every new innovation [in religion] is going astray."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Narrated by Abu Nuaym in *Hilyat Al-Awliyā'* (8/95).

(2) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on reconciliation (2697) and Muslim on legal disputes (1718).

(3) Narrated via Aisha by Muslim on legal disputes (1718), Ahmed (25472), and Al-Bukhari (9/107).

(4) Narrated via Jabir Ibn Abdullah by Muslim (867).

The Holy Qur'an makes it clear that Allah accepts only permissible actions that are performed in His name. These are the actions of the faithful who fear Allah. Allah says: "And recite to them the story of Adam's two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter]: 'I will surely kill you'. Said [the former]: 'Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]'" (Holy Qur'an, 5:27). Those who fear Allah may be despised and ridiculed by the unfaithful, but in the eyes of Allah they are the ones who are sincere. Allah says: "Those who criticize the contributors among the believers concerning [their] charities and [criticize] the ones who find nothing [to spend] except their effort, so they ridicule them - Allah will ridicule them, and they will have a painful punishment" (Holy Qur'an, 9:79). As for the hypocrites, Allah would not accept them or their actions, unless they repent sincerely: "Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper - Except for those who repent, correct themselves, hold fast to Allah, and are sincere in their religion for Allah, for those will be with the believers. And Allah is going to give the believers a great reward" (Holy Qur'an, 4:145-146).

The above mentioned conditions for accepted, and rewarded, actions indicate that Islam places moral values at the highest status. In other words, it is the morality of an action that makes it worthy of Allah's accepting it, not its quality or quantity. For example, the Holy Qur'an explicitly states regarding the sacrifices offered during *Hajj* that "their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you" (Holy Qur'an, 22:37). The Prophet (PBUH) reiterates this condition, as he says: "The reward for a deed depends upon the intention, and every person will get their reward according to what they have intended."⁽¹⁾ He also says: "If one does not abstain from telling lies and falsehoods, Allah has no need for him abstaining from food and drink."⁽²⁾

The faithful are rewarded for their intentions even if they do not materialize as actions. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "He who dies without having fought in the Cause of Allah or without having thought of doing so, will die with one characteristic of hypocrisy in him."⁽³⁾ This is concerning those who are too busy with the pleasures of this world to consider the cause of Allah. By contrast, he also says: "Whoever seeks martyrdom with sincerity will be ranked by Allah among

(1) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelations (1) and Muslim on leadership (1907).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (1903), Ahmed (9839), Abu Dawud (2362), Al-Tirmidhi (707), and Ibn Majah (1689), all on fasting.

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on leadership (1910), and Ahmed (8865), Abu Dawud (2502) and Al-Nassa'i (3097) on jihad.

the martyrs even if he dies in his bed.”⁽¹⁾ Allah says: “Whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:100).

The value of moral intentions can also be seen when well-performed actions are not accepted, and even punished, because of immoral intentions. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The first to be judged on the Day of Judgment is a man who had died as a martyr. He will be brought forward. Allah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him, and the man will acknowledge them. Then He will ask him: ‘What did you do to express gratitude for it?’ The man will reply: ‘I fought in Your cause till I was martyred’. Allah will say: ‘You have lied. You fought so that people would call you courageous; and they have done so’. A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell. Next, a man who learned and taught the Holy Qur’an will be brought forward, Allah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him, and the man will acknowledge them. Then, He will ask him: ‘What did you do to express gratitude for it?’ The man will reply: ‘I acquired knowledge and taught it, and read the Holy Qur’an for Your sake’. Allah will say to him: ‘You have lied. You acquired knowledge so that people would call you a scholar, and you read the Holy Qur’an so that they would call you a reciter, and they have done so’. A command will then be issued about him, and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell. Next a man whom Allah had made affluent and to whom Allah had given plenty of wealth, will be brought forward, Allah will remind him of the favors He had bestowed upon him, and the man will acknowledge them. He will ask him: ‘What did you do to express gratitude for it?’ The man will reply: ‘I did not neglect any of the ways You liked wealth to be spent generously for Your sake’. Allah will say to him: ‘You have lied. You did it so that people would call you generous, and they have done so’. A command will then be issued about him and he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hell.”⁽²⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) was once asked about people fighting for spoils of war, for defending their communities, and for proving themselves courageous warriors. He answered: “He who fights for Allah’s word to become Superior, is [the only one] striving in Allah’s Cause.”⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated via Sahl Ibn Hanif by Muslim on leadership (1909), Abu Dawud on prayers (1520), and Al-Nassa’i on jihad.

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on leadership (1905), Ahmed (8277), and Al-Nassa’i on jihad (3137).

(3) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ashari by Al-Bukhari on knowledge (123) and Muslim on leadership (1904); and Abu Dawud (2517), Al-Tirmidhi (1646), Al-Nassa’i (3136), and Ibn Majah (2783), all four on jihad.

There are many other hadiths that emphasize the value of intentions and how they are necessary conditions for a deed to be accepted by Allah: A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked: "What do you think of a man who fights seeking reward and fame. What will he have?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "He will have nothing." The man repeated his question three times, and each time the Prophet answered: "He will have nothing." Then, the Prophet said: "Allah does not accept any deed, unless it is purely intended for His sake." This is why intentions have such a central position in the canons of Islamic education. Ibn Atta Allah writes in his *Book of Wisdom*: "Allah does not like shared deeds or shared hearts. He does not accept deeds intended for anything other than His grace, and He does not approach a heart that has place for anything else."⁽¹⁾ Allah says: "Whoever would hope to meet his Lord - let him do righteous deeds and not associate with anyone in the worship of his Lord" (Holy Qur'an, 18:110).

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab narrates that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: "(The value of) an action depends on the intentions behind it. A man will be rewarded only for what he intends. The emigration of one who emigrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger is for the sake of Allah and His Messenger; and the emigration of one who emigrates for gaining a worldly advantage or for marrying a woman is for what he has emigrated."⁽²⁾ This hadith is one of the essential texts of the Sunnah and Islam itself. Some scholars even consider it to encompass one quarter or even one third of Islam. Imam Al-Shafi states that it is the cornerstone of 70 subfields of religious knowledge. This is because sincere intentions are necessary for the validity of all acts of worship. Sincere intentions also turn personal habits and common actions into sincere acts of worship.

Sincere intentions, however, do not change the nature of forbidden acts. For example, ill-gotten money, say earned from gambling, bribes, or usury, cannot be used to perform good deeds, such as giving to charity, regardless of the intentions. Allah is good, and He only accepts what is good. Other hadiths on intentions include:

- *The Prophet (PBUH) says: "An army will invade the Ka'bah, and when it reaches a desert land, all of them will be swallowed up by the earth." Aisha asked: "Oh Messenger of Allah! Why all of them if they include the weak and the non-combatants?" He answered: "All of them will be swallowed by the earth but they will be raised for Judgment according to their intentions."*⁽³⁾

(1) *Al-Hikam*, Entry 203.

(2) Narrated via Omar by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelations (1), Muslim on leadership (1907), Ahmed (168), Abu Dawud on divorce (2201), Al-Tirmidhi on jihad (1647), Al-Nassa'i on purification (75), and Ibn Majah on asceticism.

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on business interactions (2118) and Muslim on social strife (2884).

- *"People will be resurrected [and judged] according to their intentions."⁽¹⁾ In another version: "People will be gathered [on the Day of Resurrection] according to their intentions."*
- *Anas Ibn Malik narrates: "We were coming back from the Battle of Tabuk with the Prophet (PBUH) when he remarked: 'There are people whom we left behind in Medina. They have accompanied us in every pass and valley we crossed'. Someone asked: 'How come they have been with us and in Medina at the same time?' He answered: 'They were sick [and therefore, they earned the same reward]'. "⁽²⁾*
- *"Allah does not look at your figures, or at your attire, but He looks at your hearts."⁽³⁾*
- *Abu Kabsha Al-Anmari narrates that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: "I swear by Allah for three [qualities] which I am going to tell you about. Remember them well: No wealth diminishes by giving to charity; Allah increases people's honor if they endure oppression patiently; Allah opens a gate of poverty for everyone who pushes people into begging for money."⁽⁴⁾*
- *Ma'n Ibn Yazid narrates: "My father set aside some dinars for charity and gave them to a man at the mosque. I went to that man and took back the money. He said: 'I had not intended this money for you'. We went to the Prophet (PBUH), and put the matter before him. He said to my father: 'Yazid, you have been rewarded for what you intended'. He said to me: 'Ma'n, you are entitled to what you have taken'. "⁽⁵⁾*
- *"Whoever goes to bed intending to get up and pray at night, but is overcome by sleep until the morning will have his intentions recorded and his sleep is a charity given to him by his Lord."⁽⁶⁾*
- *"A man said: 'Tonight, I will give to charity'. He took his money out and gave it to a man who turned out to be a thief. In the morning people were*

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (9090) and Ibn Majah on asceticism (4229).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on jihad and biographies (2839), Ahmed (12009), and Abu Dawud on jihad (2508). This hadith also concerns those who could not join in the battle because they did not have camels or horses to ride to the battlefield. Allah says in this regard, "Nor [is there blame] upon those who, when they came to you that you might give them mounts, you said, 'I can find nothing for you to ride upon.' They turned back while their eyes overflowed with tears out of grief that they could not find something to spend [for the cause of Allah]" (Holy Qur'an, 9:92).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on kinship ties (2564).

(4) Narrated by Ahmed (18031) and Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (2325).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on *Zakat* (1422) and Ahmed (15860).

(6) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda or Abu Dhar via Al-Nassa'i (1787), Ibn Majah (1344), Ibn Khuzayma (1172), Ibn Hibban (2588), Al-Albani in *Al-Irwā'* (454).

saying: 'A thief was given charity last night'. The man said: 'Thank Allah, I have given to a thief. Indeed, I will give more to charity tonight'. He took his money again and gave it to a woman who turned out to be a prostitute. In the morning, people were saying: 'A prostitute was given charity last night'. On hearing this, the man said: 'Thank Allah, I gave charity to a prostitute. Indeed, I will give more to charity tonight'. He took his money out and gave it to a man who turned out to be rich. In the morning, people were saying: 'A rich man was given charity last night'. The man said: 'Thank Allah, I have given charity to a thief, a prostitute, and a rich man'. The man was told [in a vision] that his charity to the thief would result in that thief's refraining from theft, his charity to the prostitute would help her abstain from immorality, and his charity to the rich man would teach him to spend from what Allah had bestowed upon him.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1421), Muslim (1022), and Al-Nassa'i (2523), all on *Zakat*.

3.5 Work And Exerted Effort

The Islamic theory of ethics offers clear guidelines that help the faithful serve Allah. For example, it elucidates the importance of intentions and sincerity as the driving force behind actions. However, intentions have to be accompanied with effort. The basic principle here is that people should apply their best effort, knowledge, and abilities. This is why the Holy Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the connection between faith and action: "Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - they will have the Gardens of Paradise as lodging" (Holy Qur'an, 18:107). For a moral act to count as such, it has to be a willful act, motivated by sincere intentions, and carried out to the best of one's ability.

Volition is the most important requirement for an act to be considered ethical. Those who do not meet this criterion, either because they are mentally incapable or because they are too young, are not accountable. Only those who meet the volition condition qualify for the test of ethics in Islam. Islamic ethics requires sincere faith and the will to act as conditions for deeds to be accepted: "And say, 'Do [as you will], for Allah will see your deeds, and [so, will] His Messenger and the believers. And you will be returned to the Knower of the unseen and the witnessed, and He will inform you of what you used to do'" (Holy Qur'an, 9:105).

Volition relates to two types of acts, namely good deeds and refraining from committing evil ones. Both types are often referred to as the actions that stem from the fear of Allah: "We have instructed those who were given the Scripture before you and yourselves to fear Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 4:131); and "Hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous - Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good; And those who, when they commit an immorality or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins except Allah? - and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know" (Holy Qur'an, 3:133-135).

Thus, everyone who is responsible is required to perform righteous deeds to the best of their ability. Allah says: "No person is charged with more than his capacity" (Holy Qur'an, 2:233); and "Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it" (Holy Qur'an, 65:7). It is Allah's justice that nobody is expected to go beyond the limits of their abilities: "Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear" (Holy Qur'an, 2:286). We see in some religious traditions that have been distorted that religious duties can be quite burdensome, whereas Islam emphasizes balance and moderation in many verses of the Holy Qur'an:

- *"Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us" (Holy Qur'an, 2:286). Allah also says: "Thus we have made you a just community" (Holy Qur'an, 2:143).*
- *"That you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance" (Holy Qur'an, 55:8-9).*
- *"Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" (Holy Qur'an, 2:185).*
- *"Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you" (Holy Qur'an, 5:6).*
- *"He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty" (Holy Qur'an, 33:78).*

The faithful are required to avoid evil deeds and to do good ones. Good deeds are necessary for the material and spiritual well-being of the individual and society. Allah says:

- *"By time, indeed, mankind is in loss - Save those who believe and do good works, and exhort one another to the truth and exhort one another to endurance" (Holy Qur'an, 103:1-3).*
- *"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - indeed, We will not allow to be lost the reward of any who did well in deeds" (Holy Qur'an, 18:30).*
- *"Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - they will have the Gardens of Paradise as a lodging" (Holy Qur'an, 18:107).*

For an action to be considered a good deed, it has to be a permissible act with pure intentions, as we discussed earlier. Forbidden acts cannot be accepted even if they have pure intentions, and good actions cannot be accepted if performed through forbidden means. The interesting point here is that social acceptance is irrelevant. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "He who gives in charity the value of a date earned through permissible means, and Allah accepts only that which is pure, Allah accepts it with His Right Hand and fosters it for him, as one of you fosters his mare, until it becomes as big as a mountain."⁽¹⁾ He also says: "Allah Almighty is Good and accepts only that which is good."⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (1410), Muslim (1014), both on Zakat, and Ahmed (8381).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on Zakat (1015) and Ahmed (8347).

Social pressure can play a dual role in one's ability to do good works. While it can promote virtue and encourage people to do good deeds, individuals can still be pressured to do otherwise. Thus, it is necessary to resist temptation and continue the struggle in Allah's cause. Allah says: "Fear Allah as much as you can" (Holy Qur'an, 64:16) and "Oh you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared" (Holy Qur'an, 3:102). These two verses are not contradictory, as everyone is expected to fear Allah at all times, but only as much as humanly possible. While it is only human to err, one should heed Amr Ibn Ma'id Yakrub's words:

If you cannot do it right, let it be

And move on to what you can.

Just as Allah says: "Oh you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared" (Holy Qur'an, 3:102), He also says: "Strive for Allah with the striving due to Him" (Holy Qur'an, 22:87). This strife is individually assessed according to one's ability: "Prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy" (Holy Qur'an, 8:60). Thus, every day in the life of a faithful person is a continuous struggle to perform at one's best to reform oneself and society, as Prophet Shuayb (Jethro) says: "I only intend to reform as much as I can. And my success is only through Allah. Upon him I have relied, and to Him I return" (Holy Qur'an, 11:88).

What does it mean to do one's work to the best of his/her ability? The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah explain this concept in various ways. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) has taught us that Allah does not accept a deed unless one perfects it as much as his/her abilities allow: "Allah has prescribed kindness for everything. When you kill, you must make the killing in the best manner; when you slaughter, make your slaughter in the best manner. Let one of you sharpen his knife and give ease to his animal."⁽¹⁾ Perfecting one's work is a way of following the example of Allah, who says: "[It is He] Who perfected everything which He created" (Holy Qur'an, 32:7); and "[It is] the work of Allah, who perfected all things" (Holy Qur'an, 27:88). The requirement of going above and beyond duty to do one's utmost in everything should make the Ummah a world leader in productivity and development.

Islamic ethics aims to help Muslims excel in this life and the afterlife, hence the continuous reminders in the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah that people are required to achieve their full potential. Allah says: "Do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good" (Holy Qur'an, 2:195); and the Prophet (PBUH) says: "Allah loves a servant to perfect his work."⁽²⁾ This moral perfection [to the best of one's

(1) *Sunan an-Nassa'i* (4411).

(2) Narrated via Aisha by Abu Ya'la (4386), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (897), Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Shu'ab* on honesty (5312), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi'* (1880).

abilities] applies to all aspects of life: “Argue with them [the People of the Book] in the way that is best” (Holy Qur’an, 16:125); “Not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] with that [deed] which is better” (Holy Qur’an, 41:34); “Do not approach the orphan’s property except in the way that is best” (Holy Qur’an, 6:152); “Follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord” (Holy Qur’an, 39:55); and “Give good tidings to My servants who listen to speech and follow the best of it” (Holy Qur’an, 39:17-18). This applies even in prayers, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: “When you ask Allah [for something], ask for Paradise, which is the best and highest place in heaven.”⁽¹⁾

Just as Islam sets an upper limit (human perfection) for one’s work, it also sets a lower limit, which is patient perseverance. Muslims are not allowed to accept a low quality of life. Rather, they are urged to proactively persevere in the face of hardships. They are expected to be ambitious and to continuously ask Allah for support to overcome all hurdles. Allah says: “If you are patient and fear Allah - indeed, that is of the matters [worthy] of determination.” (Holy Qur’an, 3:186). Prophet Joseph says: “He who fears Allah and is patient, then indeed, Allah does not allow to be lost the reward of those who do good” (Holy Qur’an, 12:90). Even acts of worship require perseverance and patience: “Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them - so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?” (Holy Qur’an, 19:65).

Ethical social interactions also require patience and perseverance. Allah taught his Prophet (PBUH) to be patient, even though he was verbally and physically abused: “Be gracefully patient” (Holy Qur’an, 70:5); “Be patient over what they say and gracefully avoid them” (Holy Qur’an, 73:10); and “Be patient, [Oh Mohammed], as were those of determination among the messengers and do not be impatient with them” (Holy Qur’an, 46:35). Note that this perseverance is not a recommended optional moral quality. It is mandated in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah as we have seen. Even if one lives in a corrupt society, our hearts should always be attached to Allah and to strive to do our very best. Allah says: “[He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed” (67:2). Patience and perseverance lead to human perfection, and all of them are invaluable moral qualities that Islam mandates.

Achieving human perfection is not by any means an easy task, for it is only human to err. This is why moral education in Islam takes people through gradient steps to train them on moral conduct. It starts by doing good deeds to compensate for bad ones: “Good deeds do away with misdeeds” (Holy Qur’an, 11:114). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Do good deeds after doing bad ones, for the former will

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on jihad and biographies (2790), Ahmed (8419), and Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of heaven (2530).

wipe out the latter.”⁽¹⁾ In other words, if one is tempted and committed a sin, no matter how serious, we are not allowed to give up on Allah’s mercy, for His forgiveness is greater than any sin: “Oh My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 39:53).

In fact, Allah has ordered the angels to ask forgiveness on behalf of the faithful: “Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with praise of their Lord and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying]: ‘Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge, so forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire. Our Lord, and admit them to gardens of perpetual residence which You have promised them and whoever was righteous among their fathers, their spouses and their offspring. Indeed, it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise. And protect them from the evil consequences [of their deeds]. And he whom You protect from evil consequences that Day - You will have given him mercy. And that is the great attainment’” (Holy Qur’an, 40:7-9).

No matter how significant one’s sins are, they can be forgiven if one regrets committing them and asks for forgiveness. Also, no matter how insignificant one’s good deeds might seem, one needs to remember that Allah accepts all good deeds. Allah says: “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it” (Holy Qur’an, 99:7-8). This is why the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions and family used to give a date or even half a date to charity.⁽²⁾ Allah rebukes those who ridicule the faithful for giving little to charity because of their limited means: “Those who criticize the contributors among the believers concerning [their] charities and [criticize] the ones who find nothing [to spend] except their effort, so they ridicule them - Allah will ridicule them, and they will have a painful punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 9:79).

This is Allah’s grace: no sin is too great, and no good deed is too small. The Sunnah offers numerous examples of good deeds that some might consider insignificant, but are great deeds in the eyes of Allah, such as wiping a tear off an orphan’s face, giving a drink to someone thirsty or even a thirsty animal, and giving a little bit of food to someone hungry. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The best charity is what you give to an enemy in your family”⁽³⁾ because priority is given to

(1) Narrated via Mu`adh Ibn Jabal by Ahmed (21988), Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1987), Al-Hakim on faith (1/54), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi`* (97).

(2) See hadith narrated via Aisha by Malik in *Al-Muwatta`* (2/997).

(3) Narrated via Abu Ayyub Al-Ansari by Ahmed (23530), Al-Tabarai in *Al-Kabīr* (4/138) and *Al-Awsaṭ* (3279), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi`* (1110).

family members. Moreover, when giving charity to an enemy, one is not expecting anything in return, i.e., this charity is intended only to seek Allah's grace. He also says: "The best charity is what you give while you are healthy and poor, fearing poverty and wishing to be wealthy."⁽¹⁾ What is special about this charity is that whoever gives it is not expecting good health in return, and it is someone who barely has enough money for immediate needs. In another hadith, the Prophet (PBUH) says: "The best charity is what is given by those who can barely afford to give to those one is responsible for."⁽²⁾ We have also discussed the hadith: "A Dirham surpassed 100,000 Dirhams. They said: 'How?' He said: 'A man with a substantial wealth gave 100,000 Dirhams to charity, and another had only two Dirhams and gave one in charity'. A single dirham from someone who has only two is more valuable than 100,000 from someone who has millions."

The road to heaven, however, is full of obstacles, as there are those who will stand in the way all along. This is why, we always ask for Allah's help to overcome them: "It is You we worship and You we ask for help" (Holy Qur'an, 1:5).

The first obstacle in one's way to paradise is the inner self, which Allah describes as "the persistent enjoiner of evil". In other words, it does not order one to do evil, but it lures one into evil. The faithful have to reject these temptations. The Queen in Prophet Joseph's story says: "I do not acquit myself. Indeed, the soul is a persistent enjoiner of evil, except for those upon whom my Lord has mercy" (Holy Qur'an, 12:53). It is the nature of the inner self that brings destruction. It is what tempted Cain to kill his brother: "His [Cain's] soul permitted him to murder his brother, so he killed him and became one of the losers" (Holy Qur'an, 5:30). Cain was not a member of a society that would corrupt him and push him to evil. It was his inner self that brought his destruction. The other side of the inner self is the good loving side that resists evil and reproaches one when he/she commits a sin. This moral compass is what caused Cain remorse for killing his brother as he watched the crow bury its brother: "'Woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?' And he became of the regretful" (Holy Qur'an, 5:31).

This mixed nature of the inner self is the internal guide to good and evil alike. Allah says: "[By] the soul and He who proportioned it - And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness" (Holy Qur'an, 91:7-8); "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful" (Holy Qur'an, 76:3); and "We have shown him the two ways" (Holy Qur'an, 90:10). It is this mixed nature that causes people internal struggle and hardship: "We have certainly created man into hardship" (Holy Qur'an, 90:4).

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (1748) and Muslim on *Zakat* (1032).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on spending (5356) and Muslim on *Zakat* (1042).

The inner self is not inherently good or evil. It is in a constant struggle between these two forces. With resistance and patience, one can train his/her inner self to stay away from evil, thus becoming a "reproaching soul", which Allah describes in: "I swear by the Day of Resurrection - and I swear by the reproaching soul [to the certainty of resurrection]" (Holy Qur'an, 75:1-2). Once this change becomes well-established, the inner self can be further trained until it reaches the status of the "reassured soul" mentioned in "[To the righteous it will be said], 'O reassured soul, return to your Lord, well-pleased and pleasing [to Him]'" (Holy Qur'an, 89:27-28). It is spiritual training that guides the inner self from one state to the other, thus achieving its purification. Allah says: "Those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good" (Holy Qur'an, 29:69). Just like the inner self can be purified, it can also be corrupted to the lowest status of evil. Allah says: "Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire - and never will you find for them a helper" (Holy Qur'an, 4:145). This is true jihad. It does not involve weapons or killing, but it purifies the soul and preserves it from falling into the pit of evil.

Satan, mankind's worst enemy, is the second obstacle in the path to heaven. He is an invisible enemy of a different nature. Adam saw him, but he could not resist the temptation for too long and ended up eating from the Forbidden Tree. Allah says: "Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]" (Holy Qur'an, 20:121-122). The enmity between Satan and mankind started the moment humans were created. When Allah created Adam, he ordered the angels to bow to him. They all obeyed, except for Satan who was too proud. Satan was jinn, as stated in the Holy Qur'an, but according to the tradition, he lived with the angels for thousands of years until he almost became one of them. When Satan disobeyed, Allah asked why he did so. "He [Satan] said: 'I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay'. [Allah] said: 'Then get out of Paradise, for indeed, you are expelled. And indeed, upon you is My curse until the Day of Recompense'" (Holy Qur'an 38:76-78); "Satan responded: 'Because You have put me in error, I will surely sit in wait for them on Your straight path. Then I will come to them from before them and from behind them and on their right and on their left, and You will not find most of them grateful [to You]'" (Holy Qur'an, 7:16-17).

Adam was expelled from heaven and sent down to earth, so that he and his offspring would develop it and worship Allah. Satan too was sent down to earth to lure mankind away from the true path. However, Allah did not give Satan power over all people. When Satan swore: "By Your might, I will surely mislead them all - Except, among them, Your chosen servants" (Holy Qur'an, 38:82-83), Allah responded: "Indeed, My servants - no authority will you [Satan] have over them, except those who follow you of the deviators" (Holy Qur'an, 15:42).

The fierce battle continues between Satan and mankind. They resist, fight, and seek Allah's protection against him: "Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, The Sovereign of mankind - The Allah of mankind - From the evil of the retreating whisperer - Who whispers [evil] into the chests of mankind - From among the jinn and mankind'" (Holy Qur'an, 114:1-6). However, Satan, his offspring, and his followers have no weapons to fight with other than their scruples: "Satan will say when the matter has been concluded, 'Indeed, Allah had promised you the truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves'" (Holy Qur'an, 14:22). Satan cannot hurt people directly, but if they obey him, they lose.

The third obstacle is the pleasures of the world and all its temptations. Allah says: "Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver, fine branded horses, and cattle and tilled land - That is the enjoyment of worldly life" (Holy Qur'an, 3:14). This verse summarizes all the pleasures that people pursue, and might even kill each other for to get their hands on them.

The faithful can conquer this obstacle only by comparing it to the pleasures in heaven. The pleasures of this world are temporary, whereas those in the afterlife are eternal. The worldly pleasures might look attractive, but they are nothing compared to what Allah has in store for the faithful: "Say, 'The enjoyment of this world is little, and the Hereafter is better for he who fears Allah. And injustice will not be done to you, [even] as much as a thread [inside a date seed]'. Wherever you may be, death will overtake you, even if you should be within towers of lofty construction" (Holy Qur'an, 4:77-78).

If people like enjoying pleasures so much, why would anyone deny themselves the bliss of the afterlife? This is eternal material and spiritual bliss that far exceeds anything people can even imagine. Allah says: "No soul knows what has been hidden from them for the comfort of their eyes, as reward for what they have done" (Holy Qur'an, 32:17); "But approval from Allah is greater. It is that which is the great attainment" (Holy Qur'an, 9:72); and "For those who have done good is the best [reward] and much more" (Holy Qur'an, 10:26). Scholars of Qur'anic studies agree that the "best reward" is seeing Allah and deserving His approval, both of which are not for the disbelievers: "No! Indeed, from their Lord, that Day, they will be partitioned" (Holy Qur'an, 83:15). The faithful should not give in to temptation, but resist and fight it to earn salvation. Allah says: "As for he who transgressed - And preferred the life of the world, then indeed, Hellfire will be [his] refuge. But as for he who feared the position of his Lord and prevented the soul from [unlawful] inclination, then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge" (Holy Qur'an, 79:37-41).

The fourth obstacle that hinders people from achieving their moral perfection is other people. While many people are not enemies or haters of the truth, most are. Allah says: "If you obey most of those upon the earth, they will mislead you from the way of Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 6:116). Most people do not think, believe, or appreciate Allah's grace "except for those who believe and do righteous deeds - and few are they" (Holy Qur'an, 38:24) and "few of My servants are grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 34:13).

People are easily influenced by others, for evil spreads like an infectious disease. People will try to corrupt others by all means possible. They can facilitate corruption, secretly tempt others to evil, or blatantly promote evil publically. This is why Allah has warned the Prophet (PBUH): "Then We put you, [Oh Mohammed], on an ordained way concerning the matter [of religion]; so follow it and do not follow the inclinations of those who do not know. Indeed, they will never avail you against Allah at all" (Holy Qur'an, 45:18-19). People from other religious traditions tend to want others to join them, even if their belief systems are distorted. Allah warns the Prophet (PBUH) against those who did not want Islam to spread: "Judge, [Oh Mohammed], between them [People of the Book] by what Allah has revealed and do not follow their inclinations and beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you" (Holy Qur'an, 5:49).

Allah also warns against those who want to mislead others away from the true path: "Do not obey him whose heart We have made heedless of Our remembrance and who follows his desire and whose affair is ever [in] neglect" (Holy Qur'an, 18:28); and "Do not obey the deniers. They wish that you would soften [in your position], so they would soften [toward you] - And do not obey every worthless habitual swearer - [And] scorner, going about with malicious gossip - A preventer of good, transgressing and sinful, Cruel, moreover, and an illegitimate pretender - Because he is a possessor of wealth and children" (Holy Qur'an, 68:8-14).

The Holy Qur'an issues a stern warning against joining the disbelievers in their false ways and their attempts to mislead the faithful. Allah says: "Oh you who have believed, if you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] unbelievers. And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path" (Holy Qur'an, 3:100-101). Not only would the disbelievers want the faithful to lose their faith, they also want to divide and weaken them. This is why Allah commands the faithful: "Hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided" (Holy Qur'an, 3:103) and "Do not be like the ones who became divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment" (Holy Qur'an, 3:105). The Prophet (PBUH) also

says: "Do not revert after me to disbelievers who cut each other's throats."⁽¹⁾

Thus, we should be aware of those trying relentlessly to take us away from our religion or off the true path. If they fail to shake our faith, they try to take us away from prayers, fasting, and other acts of worship. If they fail, they try to at least keep us from achieving our moral potential. The enemies of Islam, humans and jinn alike, will always try by any means to detract us from our faith as much as they can. Allah says: "Thus, We have made for every prophet an enemy - devils from mankind and jinn, inspiring to one another decorative speech in delusion. But if your Lord had willed, they would not have done it, so leave them and that which they invent - And [it is] so the hearts of those who disbelieve in the Hereafter will incline toward it and that they will be satisfied with it and that they will commit that which they are committing" (Holy Qur'an, 6:112-113).

In these verses and several others, Allah warns the Prophet (PBUH) against those enemies who would not believe him, just as they did not believe all the other prophets. Allah says: "If they deny you, [Oh Mohammed] - so were messengers denied before you" (Holy Qur'an, 3:184); "Certainly were messengers denied before you, but they were patient over [the effects of] denial, and they were harmed" (Holy Qur'an, 6:34); "Nothing is said to you, [Oh Mohammed], except what was already said to the messengers before you. Indeed, your Lord is a possessor of forgiveness and a possessor of painful penalty" (Holy Qur'an, 41:43); and "Thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals" (Holy Qur'an, 25:43). Warqa Ibn Nawfal, a Nestorian priest and Khadija's cousin, told the Prophet (PBUH) when the revelations started: "Everyone who had these [revelations] ended up having many enemies."⁽²⁾

The issue of Satan as an enemy of the Prophet (PBUH) and the faithful is easier to comprehend than the idea of people being Satan-like, as in "devils from mankind and jinn". The Arabic word for "Satan" is شيطان (pronounced Shayṭān), and it refers to anyone who deviates from the norm in an evil way. Al-Tabari explains in his exegesis of the Holy Qur'an, that devils can be jinn or human, and they support each other.⁽³⁾ Ibn Kathir includes many hadiths narrated by Imam Ahmed and Al-Tabari via Abu Dhar that support this explanation. For example, The Prophet (PBUH) said to Abu Dar: "Seek refuge with Allah from the evils of the devils among the jinn and mankind." He asked: "Are there devils among mankind?" The Prophet (PBUH) replied: "Yes". In his exegesis, Al-Qurtubi quotes Malik Ibn Dinar as saying: "The human devils are more of a challenge to me than the jinn devils. If I ask Allah to protect me from the jinn devils, they go away. Human devils, on the other hand, come to me and sometimes drag me into sin."

(1) Narrated via Jarir Ibn Abdullah by Al-Bukhari on knowledge (121) and Muslim on faith (65).

(2) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelations (3) and Muslim on faith (160).

(3) See *Tafsir AL-Tabari* (12/55).

3.6 Complementary Principles To The Five Foundations Of Moral Philosophy In Islam

Having discussed the five principles Dr. Draz established as the foundations of Islamic moral theory, I would like to draw attention to a few additional principles. Dr. Draz did not ignore those additional ones, as he treated them as presupposed premises. In this section, I will discuss those premises in some detail.

Islam Is The Religion Of Sound Instincts

Islam has exonerated humanity from many unfounded claims about human nature. Humans are not savage wolves, or evolved apes, as some philosophers claim. They are not inherently evil because of an original sin. The Holy Qur'an tells us that Adam did err, but it also explicitly states that Allah has forgiven him and wipes away his sins: "Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. Then his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]" (Holy Qur'an, 20:121-122). Even if Adam did not repent, his descendants would not be held accountable for his sins. Every individual in Islam is accountable only for the sins he/she commits knowingly. Allah says: "Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained" (Holy Qur'an, 74:38); and "Every soul earns not [blame] except against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another" (Holy Qur'an, 6:164).

People are born with a sound instinct, which is neither pure like the angels nor evil like the devils, and as they grow they choose which path to follow. Allah says:

- *"We have shown him the two ways" (Holy Qur'an, 90:10); "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful" (Holy Qur'an, 76:3).*
- *"[By] the soul and He who proportioned it - And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness. He has succeeded who purifies it, and he has failed who instills it [with corruption]" (Holy Qur'an, 91:9-10).*
- *"Rather, man, against himself, will be a witness" (Holy Qur'an, 75:14).*

People choose what to do with their moral instinct. They can further develop it to achieve purification, or they can choose to ignore it and go down the path of evil: "Indeed, We guided him to the way, be he grateful or be he ungrateful" (Holy Qur'an, 76:3). Many of the verses that describe the beginning of humanity tell us about the duality of human nature. This nature is a mix of materialism and spirituality. The materialism comes from the clay that people were created from, and the spirituality comes from the divine element often called the "spirit" or the "soul". Allah says: "When I have proportioned him [Adam] and breathed into him

of My [created] soul, then fall down to him in prostration. The angels prostrated - all of them entirely” (Holy Qur’an, 38:72-73). Those who focus only on the materialistic side of human nature see humanity as evil, whereas those who focus only on the spiritual side see humans as pure. Justice is to accept the dual nature of humanity, which is one of the foundations of Islamic ethics.

Moral Life Is Founded On Knowledge And Willpower

Knowledge is an essential foundation of ethics in Islam. In fact, Islam gives knowledge priority over moral behavior, as indicated in: “Those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it” (Holy Qur’an, 22:54). This is because knowledge often leads to faith and ethics. Willpower is a manifestation of intentions, which we discussed in the previous sections as a foundation of Islamic ethics. Knowledge by itself does not necessarily lead to morality, as Socrates claims. There are many examples in everyday life of people who know what is good and virtuous but choose not to do it, or know what is evil and persist in doing it. Allah says: “They rejected them [Our true signs], even though their inner selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness. See what the end of the corrupters was like” (Holy Qur’an, 27:14). Justice is only achieved with knowledge and the will to act on it. A judge, for example, who issues rulings without sufficient knowledge of the law might issue valid rulings sometimes, but most of the time his rulings would be unjust.

Muslims are required to pursue knowledge. At the minimum, they need to be fully aware of their duties toward Allah, people, and themselves. They are also required to exercise their will by training their inner selves to resist temptation, which is what Imam Ali called the “greater jihad”. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A mujahid, someone who fights in Allah’s cause, is one who strives against his own inner self.”⁽¹⁾ He also says: “A strong man is not someone who is good at wrestling, but someone who controls himself when angry.”⁽²⁾ The faithful use their knowledge and willpower to support each other in Allah’s cause: “The believing men and believing women are allies of one another” (Holy Qur’an, 9:71).

Perseverance And Consistency Establish Morality

As we discussed earlier, sincere effort is necessary for good deeds to be accepted. The sincerity of effort is an outcome of faith, without which effort loses its moral

(1) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari on faith (10), Ahmed (6515), and Abu Dawud on jihad (2481).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on manners (6114) and Muslim on kinship relations (2609).

value. However, sincere effort is not a one-time happening, as it should be a consistent pattern and a well-established moral habit. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The acts most pleasing to Allah are those done consistently, even if they are small.”⁽¹⁾ This hadith reiterated the verse: “Have you seen the one who turned away and gave a little and [then] refrained?” (Holy Qur’an, 53:33-34).

Moral Work Is Intentional

Sincere effort and moral actions are not considered valid unless they are the product of a willful power, i.e., good deeds performed under duress are not counted. The Holy Qur’an even denounces those who perform what looks like good deeds only because they are pressured to do them. For example, Allah says: “Among the Bedouins are those who consider what they spend [in charity] a loss” (Holy Qur’an, 9:98); “They [the hypocrites] come not to prayer except while they are lazy and they do not spend except while they are unwilling” (Holy Qur’an, 9:54); and “Indeed, the hypocrites [think to] deceive Allah, but He is deceiving them. And when they stand for prayer, they stand lazily, showing [themselves to] the people and not remembering Allah except a little” (Holy Qur’an, 4:142).

Islam Recognizes The Ethical Conscience

Islam recognizes an internal moral power, which is often referred to as the ethical sense or conscience. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “If Allah wants good for someone, He would make him his own preacher.”⁽²⁾ Moreover, Islam urges people to use this internal moral power to make moral judgments when one is not sure, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: “Leave what causes you doubt and turn to what does not cause you doubt.”⁽³⁾ A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) asking about good and evil actions. The Prophet (PBUH) answered: “Consult your heart and yourself. Righteousness is what makes your soul and heart at peace. Wrongdoing is what irks the soul and causes uneasiness in the heart, even if people tell you otherwise.”⁽⁴⁾ It is important to note here that having an internal moral compass does not mean people can do whatever they are comfortable with, as some scholars have claimed. The Prophet (PBUH) makes it clear that faith is a prerequisite for

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari (6464) and Muslim on praying while traveling (783).

(2) Narrated via Umm Salama by Al-Dulaymi in *Musnad Al-Firdaws*, Imam Ahmed via Ibn Sireen, Abu Nuaym in *Al-Hilya* (2/264), and Ibn Kathir in *Al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (9/303). Al-Albani lists it in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* as an invalid hadith.

(3) Narrated via Al-Hassan Ibn Ali by Ahmed (1723), Al-Tirmidhi (2518), Al-Nassa’i on drinks (5711), Ibn Hibban on the tenderness of the heart (2/498), and Al-Hakim on business interactions (2/15).

(4) Narrated via Wabisa Ibn Mabad by Ahmed (weak; 18006), Al-Drami on business transactions (2533), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Tarḥīb wal-Tarḥīb* (2683), Al-Nawawi in the *Arba’in* (27), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Tarḥīb wal-Tarḥīb* (1734).

this moral sense: “Whoever is pleased with his good deeds and grieves his evil deeds is a true believer.”⁽¹⁾

Morality And The Power Of Intellect

While Islam recognizes an innate moral conscience, it requires mental control over one's actions as the minimum exercise of intellectual faculties. Thus, only those with the power of intellect are accountable for their actions, as stated in the hadith: “The pen has been lifted from three: the minor until he grows up; the insane until he comes back to his senses or recovers; and the sleeper until he wakes up.”⁽²⁾ We see many jurisprudence issues whose applications are left for people's best judgment, hence the use of witnesses, cultural conventions, and the social definitions of “kindness” in verses such as “from those whom you accept as witnesses” (Holy Qur'an, 2:181); “And live with them in kindness” (Holy Qur'an, 4:19); “Upon the father is the mother's provision and her clothing, according to what is acceptable” (Holy Qur'an, 2:233), and “as judged by two just men among you” (Holy Qur'an, 5:95).

The special status of the intellect in Islam is reflected in the recurrent descriptions of the faithful in the Holy Qur'an as “those of understanding” (Holy Qur'an, 2:269). This description occurs 16 times in the Holy Qur'an to emphasize that the pursuit of the truth and sound moral judgment requires the use of the intellect. Allah says: “They will only be reminded who are people of understanding - Those who fulfill the covenant of Allah and do not break the covenant, who join what Allah has ordered to be joined and fear their Lord and are afraid of the evil of [their] account - And those who are patient, seeking the countenance of their Lord” (Holy Qur'an, 13:19-22).

We also see that the polytheists who rejected the Prophet's (PBUH) message often tried to discredit him by calling him insane, hence Allah's response and reassurance: “You are not, [Oh Mohammed], by the favor of your Lord, a madman. And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. And indeed, you are of a great moral character” (Holy Qur'an, 68:2-3). This verse emphasizes that moral character requires a sound mind.

The Middle Ground Of Islamic Ethics And The Purpose Of Doing Good

In our earlier discussions of the purpose of moral behavior, we saw two opposing views. These are: a) the idealist's view, that people should behave morally

(1) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Ahmed (sound; 114), Al-Tirmidhi on social strife (sound but odd; 2165), Al-Hakim on knowledge (1/113), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi'* (2546).

(2) Narrated via Aisha by Ahmed (sound, 24694), Abu Dawud on penalties (4398), and Al-Nassa'i on divorce (3432).

because moral behavior is a purpose in its own right; and b) the pragmatist's view, that requires individual and social benefits in return for behaving morally. Islam takes a balanced approach in this regard, as it associates moral behavior with personal happiness, material benefits in this world, and rewards in the afterlife. Moreover, Islamic ethics associates immoral behavior with pain in this world and the afterlife. The Holy Qur'an includes many verses that describe Islam's position on the purpose of moral behavior such as the following:

- *"Whoever does righteousness - it is for his [own] soul; and whoever does evil [does so] against it" (Holy Qur'an, 41:46).*
- *"If you do good, you do good for yourselves; and if you do evil, [you do it] to yourselves" (Holy Qur'an, 17:7).*
- *"Whoever does an evil deed will not be recompensed except by the like thereof; but whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - those will enter Paradise, being given provision therein without account" (Holy Qur'an, 40:40).*
- *"Whatever good you [believers] spend is for yourselves, and you do not spend except seeking the countenance of Allah. And whatever you spend of good - it will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged" (Holy Qur'an, 2:272).*

Let's consider the following verses as examples of the benefits of giving to charity:

- *"Whoever is protected from the selfishness of his soul - it is those who will be the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 59:9).*
- *"Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase, and invoke [Allah's blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing" (Holy Qur'an, 9:103).*

Those who are spared from selfishness and give to *Zakat* deserve material and spiritual rewards in this world. They enjoy personal peace and a sense of fulfillment. The community also benefits from their moral behavior, as it reduces economic disparities, promotes a sense of fraternity, and lessens social class tensions. Those who give to charity also receive generous rewards in the afterlife. At the same time, fulfilling one's moral duty is not a way to invest in personal gain, but it is a moral act done only for the sake of Allah.

Divine Justice Is The Direct Link Between Deeds In This World And Reward Or Punishment In The Afterlife

Every action, good or evil, has consequences in this world and in the afterlife. This is the basis of moral justice in Islam as stated in the verses: "Whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it" (Holy Qur'an, 99:7-8). Compared to other religions, Islam is quite distinct in this regard. For example, Judaism limits reward and punishment to this world, whereas Christianity focuses mostly on the afterlife. Islam, in contrast, balances this world and the afterlife for both types of consequences as stated in many verses of the Holy Qur'an, including:

- *"Whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out - And will provide for him from where he does not expect. And whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has already set for everything a [decreed] extent" (Holy Qur'an, 65:2-3).*
- *"Whoever does righteousness, whether male or female, while he is a believer - We will surely cause him to live a good life, and We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do" (Holy Qur'an, 16:97).*
- *"For those who do good in this world is good; and the home of the Hereafter is better. And how excellent is the home of the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 16:30).*
- *"Whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind" (Holy Qur'an, 20:124).*
- *"For them will be punishment in the life of [this] world, and the punishment of the Hereafter is more severe" (Holy Qur'an, 13:34).*

The rewards are by no means limited to material gains, as some might think. Rewards in this world can be spiritual, intellectual, and moral, as illustrated by the following verses:

- *"Say, [Oh Mohammed], 'If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:31).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion" (Holy Qur'an, 8:29).*
- *"Those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways" (Holy Qur'an, 29:69).*

The rewards in the afterlife are both material and spiritual:

- *“Eat and drink in satisfaction for what you used to do” (Holy Qur’an, 77:43).*
- *“[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, looking at their Lord” (Holy Qur’an, 75:22-23).*
- *“[Other] faces, that Day, will show pleasure satisfied with their effort” (Holy Qur’an, 88:8-9).*
- *“... and approval from Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 3:15).*
- *“... but approval from Allah is greater” (Holy Qur’an, 9:72).*

The punishment in the afterworld is not only physical, as emphasized in: “Our Lord, indeed whoever You admit to the Fire - You have disgraced him” (Holy Qur’an, 3:192).

3.7 The Three Higher Transcendental Values And Their Relation To Islam And Its Moral Philosophy

Truth, goodness, and beauty are three ideals with special status across philosophical schools and traditions. In fact, those three ideals play such an important role in education, culture, and morality that philosophers consider them to constitute one of the basic principles of philosophy. There are three main areas of philosophical inquiry: epistemology, which concerns the scope and nature of knowledge; metaphysics, which concerns that nature of existence, both necessary and possible; and transcendental values, which concern the study of truth, goodness, and beauty. The first transcendental value is truth, and it investigates the types of knowledge people should believe in and abide by. The second is goodness, which is what people should strive to be, do, and promote. The third is beauty, which concerns the aesthetics of what pleases people and brings them joy. Those three transcendental values have been one of the main areas of philosophical enquiry for centuries, as philosophies are defined by their positions toward these values. In this section, I discuss the position of Islam on truth, goodness, and beauty.

Truth

In Islam, Allah is the truth; therefore, the truth is the value of the highest status. Of all species on earth, humans are endowed with the gift of reason, and with this gift comes the responsibility of pursuing the ultimate truth, namely Allah. Allah says: “[It is Allah] Who created and proportioned - And who destined and [then] guided” (Holy Qur’an, 87:2-3). When Allah sent Moses and his brother Aaron to Pharaoh to call on him to the true path, Pharaoh said: “Who is the Lord of you two, Oh Moses?” He [Moses] said: “Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]” (Holy Qur’an, 20:49-50). It is Allah Who endowed everything in the universe with the gifts and faculties needed to serve its purpose. For mankind, it is the faculty of reasoning that helps people serve their purpose of pursuing the truth. Our knowledge is inherently limited. We can use reason to know what we do not know, but there is also divine knowledge, to which we have no access, as Moses responded to Pharaoh’s question: “Then what about previous generations?” [Moses] said: “The knowledge thereof is with my Lord in a record. My Lord neither errs nor forgets” (Holy Qur’an, 20:51-52).

It is the duty of every individual to seek the ultimate truth, Allah. This truth is not learned from teachers or books, but our instincts lead us to Him. If we do not know our Allah, we lose the fight for knowledge. The Holy Qur’an is quite explicit in stating that Allah is the truth we should seek: “For that is Allah, your Lord, the Truth. And what can be beyond truth except falsehood?” (Holy Qur’an, 10:32); and “That is because Allah is the Truth, and that what they call upon other than

Him is falsehood, and because Allah is the Most High, the Grand” (Holy Qur’an, 31:30). Those who do not realize this truth in this life will have it revealed to them in the afterlife: “That Day, Allah will pay them in full their deserved recompense, and they will know that it is Allah who is the clear Truth” (Holy Qur’an, 24:25). We are all born with the instinct to seek the truth, as Allah says: “Direct your face toward the religion, inclining to truth. [Adhere to] the fitrah [sound instinct] upon which Allah has created [all] people. No change should there be in Allah’s creation” (Holy Qur’an, 30:30).

The Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah emphasizes the idea that all people are born with an instinct that leads to the truth. He says: “Everyone is born with a sound instinct. It is the parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a worshipper of fire.”⁽¹⁾ However, people are not left for their nature only, because the environment can play a critical role, as we see from this hadith. Thus, Allah has sent His prophets to guide people back to their true nature: “[We sent] messengers to bring good tidings and warnings, so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers” (Holy Qur’an 4:165). The prophets came with Allah’s Book to be their guide: “Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets to bring good tidings and warnings and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning what they have disagreed on” (Holy Qur’an, 2:213).

Knowledge is a sign of faith, for without knowledge there can be no faith. In fact, knowledge is the only way to faith. Unlike many religious traditions, Islam does not see knowledge as a threat to faith, and it does not condone blind faith or blindly following clergymen, as in the case of Christianity. Blind faith is not accepted, as clearly stated in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah. In Islam, every article of faith needs to be based on proof. The Holy Qur’an tells us of the People of the Book who claim that only Jews and Christians will go to heaven. The response is a request for proof: “And they [the People of the Book] say: ‘No one will enter Paradise except for those who are Jewish or Christian’. That is [merely] their wishful thinking. Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you should be truthful’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:111). The very next verse offers a clear description of those will be in heaven: “[On the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while doing good will have their reward with their Lord. And they will know no fear, nor will they grieve” (Holy Qur’an, 2:112). When the unbelievers try to argue against the true path, the Holy Qur’an offers plenty of evidence: “Is He [not best] who begins creation and then repeats it and Who provides for you from the heaven and earth? Is there a deity with Allah? Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you should be truthful’” (Holy Qur’an, 27:64).

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on funerals (1358) and Muslim on fate (2658).

Reason is the foundation of Islam, as it leads to faith, which in turn motivates acts of worship and sincere gratitude. Without knowledge, people cannot appreciate Allah's blessings. Allah says:

- *"Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?" (Holy Qur'an, 31:20).*
- *"And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth - all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought" (Holy Qur'an, 45:13).*
- *"And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful" (Holy Qur'an, 14:34).*

This causal chain that starts with knowledge leads to firm faith that does not have room for associating anything with Allah. This causal chain has been broken in other religions leading to departure from the true path. Some even claimed that kings have rights on equal footing with Allah's rights, as in the cases of Caesar of Rome, Al-Muqawqas of Egypt, and Al-Najashi of Ethiopia. To reestablish this chain, Allah addresses all People of the Book: "Say: 'Oh People of the Book, come to a word [agreement] that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah'. But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:64). To truly worship Allah, one has to submit to Him in love. This submission requires a firm faith based on knowledge of the truth: "For that is Allah, your Lord, the Truth. And what can be beyond truth except falsehood?" (Holy Qur'an, 10:32). This chain that starts with knowledge and leads to submission feeds back to strengthen its links. If one submits to Allah, one is motivated to abide by His rule and to further pursue knowledge. Allah says:

- *"The only statement of the [true] believers when they are called to Allah and His Messenger to judge between them is that they say: 'We hear and we obey'. And those are the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 24:51).*
- *"It is not for a believing man or a believing woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter, that they should [thereafter] have any choice about their affair. And whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has certainly strayed into clear error" (Holy Qur'an, 33:36).*
- *"And judge, [Oh Mohammed], between them by what Allah has revealed, and do not follow their inclinations, and beware of them, lest they tempt you away from some of what Allah has revealed to you. And if they turn away -*

then know that Allah only intends to afflict them with some of their [own] sins. And indeed, many among the people are defiantly disobedient. Then is it the judgment of [the time of] ignorance they desire? But who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who are certain [in faith]” (Holy Qur’an, 5:50).

Goodness

Goodness is a transcendental value that all philosophies recognize as a highly valued moral ideal in its own right. In Islam, it is crystal clear that the pursuit of goodness is one of the foundations of faith, as it is one of the values all prophets called for. It is not easy to define “good”, because it is a generic term that refers to many things, including everything that people need to have a pleasant life, such as health, food, wealth, clothing, and even natural resources. It also refers to the social and psychological needs of a happy life, such as peace, love, kindness, cooperation, and self-denial.

Islam commands people to consistently do good in all aspects of their lives. Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed. And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him” (Holy Qur’an, 22:77-78). In these verses, Allah addresses the faithful, ordering them to worship Him, do good, and strive in His cause. The first order establishes the nature of the Allah-servant relationship. The second order, namely doing good, states the principle that governs the relationship between the individual and society. The third order elucidates the nature of the relationship between the faithful and the enemies of faith.

While goodness is a moral value in and of itself, Islam does not stop at encouraging people to do good. People are required to call on others and encourage them to do good. Allah says: “Let there be among you a community inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful” (Holy Qur’an, 3:104). If one cannot do good and call on people to do good to the fullest, one is still required to contribute as much as possible no matter how insignificant one’s contribution may seem. Allah accepts only heartfelt good deeds, even if they are as small as giving a drink of water, half a date, or a grape: “Whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it” (Holy Qur’an, 99:7-8).⁽¹⁾

The sincere intention to do good counts, even if one is unable to perform the deed. The Prophet (PBUH) says:

(1) There are numerous hadiths that reiterate this assertion. See *Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr* (8/462-464).

- *“(The value of) an action depends on the intention behind it. A man will be rewarded only for what he intends.”⁽¹⁾*
- *“The world is only for four persons: The first is a servant whom Allah provides with wealth and knowledge, so observes his Lord with them, nurtures his kinship ties with them, and he knows that Allah has a share in them. This is the highest rank. The second is a servant whom Allah provides with knowledge, but not wealth. He has truthful intentions, saying: ‘If I had wealth, I would do the deeds of so-and-so with it’. He has his intention, and their rewards are the same.”⁽²⁾*
- *“Whoever goes to bed intending to get up and pray at night, but is overcome by sleep until the morning will have his intentions recorded and his sleep is a charity given to him by his Lord.”⁽³⁾*

Beauty

The third transcendental value is beauty, which, while it seems intuitive, is a very difficult concept to define. Generally speaking, beauty is what triggers a sense of joy and awe in people’s hearts and minds regardless of their cultural backgrounds, education, age, or gender. Beauty holds a special position in Islam, and the Holy Qur’an mentions it in many contexts. We find beauty in everything that Allah has created, because it is “the work of Allah, who perfected all things” (Holy Qur’an, 27:88). Everything in the universe has its own beauty, because it is the work of Allah “Who knows what is visible and what is invisible, the Exalted in Might, the Merciful, Who perfected everything which He created” (Holy Qur’an, 32:6-7); and, as Moses told the Pharaoh: “Our Lord is He who gave each thing its form and then guided [it]” (Holy Qur’an, 20:50). Allah does not create anything ugly, even if we do not see its beauty, as Abd Al-Ghani Al-Nabulsi writes:

When you truly see Allah as the Creator

You see the whole universe in splendor.

The Holy Qur’an quite often draws our attention to the elements of beauty in the universe and encourages us to contemplate their beauty. For example, Allah says: “We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars and have made

(1) Narrated via Omar by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelations (1), Muslim on leadership (1907), Ahmed (168), Abu Dawud on divorce (2201), Al-Tirmidhi on jihad (1647), Al-Nassa’i on purification (75), and Ibn Majah on asceticism.

(2) Narrated via Abu Kabsha Al-Anmari by Ahmed (18031), Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (2325), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi’* (corrected; 5335).

(3) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda or Abu Dhar via Al-Nassa’i (1787), Ibn Majah (1344), Ibn Khuzaymah (1172), Ibn Hibban (2588), and Al-Albani in *Al-Irwā’* (454).

[from] them what is thrown at the devils” (Holy Qur’an, 67:5). This verse suggests that there are no stars in the heavens beyond the physical universe, and that these stars are a sign of beauty and a source of light. Allah also says: “We have placed within heaven great stars and have beautified it for the observers” (Holy Qur’an, 15:16); and “Have they not looked at the heaven above them - how We structured it and adorned it and [how] it has no rifts?” (Holy Qur’an, 50:6).

The Holy Qur’an also draws our attention to the elements of beauty here on earth. Allah says:

- *“And the earth - We spread it out and cast therein firmly set mountains and made grow therein of every beautiful kind” (Holy Qur’an 50:7).*
- *“It is He who sends down rain from the sky, and We produce thereby the growth of all things. We produce from it greenery from which We produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees - of its emerging fruit are clusters hanging low. And [We produce] gardens of grapevines and olives and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] its ripening. Indeed in that are signs for a people who believe” (Holy Qur’an, 6:99).*
- *“He who created the heavens and the earth and sent down for you rain from the sky, causing to grow thereby gardens of joyful beauty which you could not [otherwise] have grown the trees thereof? Is there a deity with Allah?” (Holy Qur’an, 27:60).*

The Holy Qur’an invites us to think about the beauty all around us and appreciate it, even in the animals we see: “And [He created] the horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which you do not know” (Holy Qur’an, 16:8); and “And the grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and [numerous] benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is [the enjoyment of] beauty when you bring them in [for the evening] and when you send them out [to pasture]” (Holy Qur’an, 16:5-6). These verses paint a picture of various natural elements with humans at the center, as they benefit from these animals in material as well as aesthetic ways.

Imam Abu Bakr Ibn Al-Arabi Al-Maliki offers an interesting perspective on beauty in Islam. He writes: “Beauty is not just in the natural elements we see. It is also evident in morals and actions. Physical beauty is perceived by the eye, but the heart gets attached to beauty if it appreciates it. Thus far, we have no explanation of love, and we can only think of it as a response to beauty. The beauty of morals is different, because we cannot see them. However, we appreciate them when we realize that moral values, such as wisdom, justice, virtue, and patience are manifestations of the ultimate beauty, Allah. The same applies to moral actions that

reflect these values. We appreciate them only when our hearts agree with them.”⁽¹⁾

Many other elements of beauty are mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, such as the sea: “It is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear” (Holy Qur'an, 16:14); and “He released the two seas, meeting [side by side]. Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses. Which of the favors of your Lord would you deny? From both of them emerge pearl and coral. Which of the favors of your Lord would you deny?” (Holy Qur'an, 55:19-23). These verses, as we see in many others, combine the aesthetics of natural elements with their material benefits.

The Holy Qur'an also mentions several aspects of beauty in humanity. Allah says:

- *“Oh mankind, what has deceived you concerning your Lord, the Generous, Who created you, proportioned you, and balanced you? In whatever form He willed has He assembled you” (Holy Qur'an, 82:6-8).*
- *“We have certainly created man in the best of stature” (Holy Qur'an, 95:4).*
- *“He created heaven and earth in truth, and formed you and perfected your forms; and to Him is the [final] destination” (Holy Qur'an, 64:3).*

The Prophet (PBUH) often prayed: “You are my Lord. My face has prostrated to You, the One Who gave it hearing and sight. Blessed is Allah the best of Creators.”⁽²⁾ He also said: “He who has an ant's weight of arrogance in his heart will not enter Paradise.” Someone said: “A man likes to wear beautiful clothes and shoes.” The Prophet (PBUH) responded: “Allah is Beautiful, and He loves beauty.”⁽³⁾ In these hadiths, the Prophet (PBUH) clearly states that one of Allah's attributes, often called “Allah's names”, is The Beautiful. Allah loves beauty in everything. It is important to note here that the beauty mentioned in the hadith is not associated with pride, which is rejecting the truth, a human attribute Allah does not like: “When it is said to him, ‘Fear Allah’, sinful pride takes hold of him. Sufficient for him is Hellfire, and how wretched is the resting place” (Holy Qur'an, 2:206). This sinful pride makes people fail to see beauty in others. Rather, it makes them despise them for their poverty, lack of education, or lower social status. The Prophet (PBUH) has denounced pride as he says: “For a Muslim to despise his Muslim brother is enough evil [to send him to hell].”⁽⁴⁾

(1) See *Aḥkām Al-Qur'ān* by Ibn Al-Arabi, (3/118).

(2) Narrated via Ali Ibn Abi Talib via Muslim on praying while traveling (771) and Ahmed (729).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim on faith (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud on clothing (4091).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on kinship relations (2564) and Ahmed (7713).

Nobody goes to heaven because of their wealth, social status, physical strength, or knowledge. People go to heaven only if they “fear the Most Merciful unseen and come with a heart returning [in repentance]” (Holy Qur’an, 50:33). Hence, Abraham prayed: “Do not disgrace me on the Day they are [all] resurrected - The Day when wealth and children will not benefit [anyone] - But only one who comes to Allah with a sound heart” (Holy Qur’an, 26:87-89). A sound heart is one that is free from worshipping other than Allah, hypocrisy, pride, and other moral ailments of the heart.

Chapter 4:

Applied Ethics

Prologue: The Importance Of Applied Ethics (Human And Divine)

Applies ethics (or practical ethics) is the main concern of monotheistic religions, especially Islam. Allah has sent His Prophet (PBUH) with the revelation, which aims to correct people's beliefs and reform their behavior. Allah says: "We have sent down to you the Book as clarification for all things and as guidance and mercy and good tidings for the Muslims" (Holy Qur'an, 16:89). Behavior is reformed by instilling moral values in people's hearts, as stated in: "Say, 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [He commands] that you not associate anything with Him, and to parents, good treatment, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We will provide for you and them. And do not approach immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed. And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right. This has He instructed you that you may use reason'. And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity. And give full measure and weight in justice. We do not charge any soul except [within] its capacity. And when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative. And fulfill the covenant of Allah. This has He instructed you that you may remember. And, [moreover], this is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow [other] paths, for you will be separated from His way. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 6:151-153).

These verses explain that the commandments in the Holy Qur'an aim to help people achieve self-purification by adopting moral values and acting accordingly. One of the Prophet's (PBUH) main duties is to guide people to self-purification: "It is He who has sent among the unlettered a Messenger from themselves reciting to them His verses and purifying them and teaching them the Book and wisdom - although they were before in clear error" (Holy Qur'an, 62:2). Prophets are not sent to teach different, and sometimes contradictory, moral theories or philosophies or to explain the nature of moral judgments and ethical dilemmas. It is not their duty to engage in polemics or debates over the standards of moral judgments, the sources of moral obligation, or other issues of an academic nature. Rather, all the prophets were charged with one mission, namely calling on people to act morally toward Allah, themselves, their peoples, their enemies, and the entire universe. Nevertheless, Islam offers deep insights into the motivations for moral behavior and the standards of moral judgments that lead to "that which is most suitable" (Holy Qur'an, 17:9).

Aside from the theoretical perspectives on ethics, all religions, monotheistic and otherwise, pay special attention to practical ethics due to its critical role in protecting social order. Practical ethics is needed to regulate everyday life within

families, communities, and the world as a whole. Just like individuals need practical ethics in their interactions, nation states also need practical ethics in their interactions with each other, both in times of peace and times of war, and in all other forms of international interactions.

Practical ethics has a special place in Islam, as seen from the fact that all sub-fields of Islamic Studies focus on it. In fact, all the sources of Islam aim to develop practical ethics to make it possible for individuals to perfect their morality. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "I have been sent to perfect good morals and conduct."⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) was a living example of Islamic practical ethics, hence the rich resources on the subject in the Sunnah. When Aisha was asked about the Prophet's (PBUH) moral character, she said: "His moral character was the Holy Qur'an." It is no surprise that Allah praises the Prophet (PBUH): "Indeed, you are of a great moral character" (Holy Qur'an, 68:4). One cannot overestimate the status of practical ethics in Islam. Some Sufi scholars even define Sufism as morality, whereas Ibn Al-Qayyim states that Islam is morality.

Islam requires all Muslims to apply moral values in their behavior. The main function of mankind is to worship Allah Who created humans in the best form and made everything in the world at their service. Moreover, it is Allah Who sent His messenger with the Book to teach people how to live their lives in accordance with His rule. The Holy Qur'an explains the function of mankind in detail. Allah wants for people to worship Him alone within their means, to the best of their abilities, and in ways that do not cause them hardship. Allah says: "Allah does not charge a soul except [within] its capacity" (Holy Qur'an, 2:286); "Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship" (Holy Qur'an, 2:185); and "Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it" (Holy Qur'an, 65:7). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Avoid what I forbid you to do, and do what I command you to do, to the best of your ability. The people before you went to their doom because they asked their Prophets too many questions and then disagreed over their teachings."⁽²⁾

In other words, people should completely avoid what Allah has forbidden and do what He has ordered them to do to the best of their abilities. While these commandments are clear, Allah forgives those who violate His rules under duress. For example, the following verse specifies the types of food that Muslims are forbid-

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (sound; 8952), Al-Bukhari in his *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad fī Ḥusn Al-Khuluq* (273), and Al-Hakim in his *Tawārīkh Al-Mutaqaddimīn* (2/613). It was also included in Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ* with an addition, supported by Al-Dhahabi, and classified by Al-Albani in *Al-Aḥādīth Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (25).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on following the teachings of the Qur'an and the Sunnah (7288) and Muslim on good moral qualities (1337).

den to eat, but it also reminds people of Allah's mercy for those who eat them when absolutely necessary. Allah says: "He has only forbidden to you [already] dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 2:173).

The moral rules specified in the Holy Qur'an are not to be followed blindly. People are encouraged to understand and appreciate the moral values that motivate them. The Holy Qur'an issues commandments, but it also explains why they are issued. For example, the Holy Qur'an forbids doing injustice to orphans or taking their money. It also forbids incest, such as marrying one's mother, daughter, sister, aunt, and others, and the following verses explain why. Allah says: "Allah wants to make clear to you [the lawful from the unlawful] and guide you to the [good] practices of those before you and to accept your repentance. And Allah is Knowing and Wise. Allah wants to accept your repentance, but those who follow [their] passions want you to digress [into] a great deviation. And Allah wants to lighten for you [your difficulties]; and mankind was created weak" (Holy Qur'an, 4:26-28).

There are various subcategories of practical ethics, including divine ethics and human ethics. This distinction is based on the target of moral behavior: divine, or religious, ethics has to do with the individual's moral acts toward Allah, whereas human ethics has to do with the individual's moral acts toward others, and it can be further classified into individual ethics and social ethics. Social ethics can be classified into more refined categories depending on the social domain in which moral values are translated into actions. These social domains include the family, the community, the Ummah, the nation state, and the world. Family ethics concerns the different kinds of moral behavior among family members. Community ethics has to do with moral actions that affect group relations, such as the relations among different groups and socio-economic classes. The ethics of the Ummah is the moral code that specifies the nature of relations among different Muslims communities across the world. While these communities have different languages, cultures, and traditions, they share a core belief system with its own morality. National ethics guides domestic policies, whereas global ethics guides policies, relations, and interactions with other nations.

Islamic ethics is an integral part of all aspects of life. Whatever action or decision we have to make, Islamic ethics has clear guidelines on what to do and what not to do. Islam does not separate ethics from science, work, economics, politics, or even war. In the sections below, I discuss each subcategory of practical ethics and how it translates into actions.

4.1 Divine Ethics: Human Morality Toward The Divine

Divine ethics concerns the relationship between the individual and Allah. This relationship is based on revering and loving Allah, and it manifests itself in various actions, such as remembering Allah, repenting to Him, hoping for His mercy, relying on Him alone, and appreciating His blessings. It also involves various moral values, including patience, both in worshipping Him and in avoiding sin, satisfaction with having no desire for things that impede worshipping Him, and sincerity in all actions, among others. Divine ethics is essentially a series of guidelines that help people on their journey to Allah, and it is thus the main concern of Sufism. Sufi scholarship aims to help people achieve self-purification, remain attached to Allah, and cure the hearts of their evil ailments. Below, I discuss the main moral values and actions that comprise divine ethics.

Sincerity To Allah

Sincerity to Allah means that all of one's actions are performed for Allah's sake alone. To do this, one needs to have no interest in materialistic objectives, such as wealth, social status, or power. In other words, one needs to follow Allah's commandment in "Say, [Oh Mohammed] 'Indeed, my prayers, my rituals of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. No partner has He. I have thus been commanded, and I am the first [among you] of the Muslims'" (Holy Qur'an, 6:162-163). Only righteous people can achieve this type of sincerity. Those are the ones whom the Prophet (PBUH) describes when he says: "The righteous are those who are pious and hidden. If they are absent, they are not missed, and if they are present, they are not recognized. Their hearts are beacons of guidance."⁽¹⁾

Achieving this moral ideal is a formidable feat that requires significant effort to resist temptation and to focus all of one's intentions, energy, and actions on to Allah. The main motive for achieving this ideal is realizing that Allah accepts only actions performed for His sake. Allah says: "Whoever would hope for the meeting with his Lord - let him do righteous work and not associate in the worship of his Lord anyone" (Holy Qur'an, 18:110). This motive, in turn, stems from a deeply rooted belief that Allah has created mankind only to worship Him, and acts of worship have no value unless performed with sincerity. Allah says: "They were not commanded except to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion, inclining to truth, and to establish prayer and to give *Zakat*" (Holy Qur'an, 98:5); and "Say, [Oh Mohammed] 'Indeed, I have been commanded to worship Allah, [being] sincere to Him in religion'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:11).

(1) Narrated by Ibn Majah on social strife (3989), and Al-Hakim on faith (1/4) and on the purification of the heart (4/328).

Sincerity is, first and foremost, a matter of intention. For example, people are required to pray, but their prayers are meaningful only if their sole purpose is to worship Allah. Otherwise, it is tainted with hypocrisy, as in the case of those who pray to be seen as pious: “When they [the hypocrites] stand for prayers, they stand lazily, showing [themselves to] people and not remembering Allah except a little” (Holy Qur’an, 4:142). Intentions define action. This is why intentions play such a significant role in Islamic ethics. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “(The value of) an action depends on the intentions behind it. A man will be rewarded only for what he intends.”⁽¹⁾ People are even rewarded for their sincere intentions even if these intentions do not materialize as actions. For example: “Whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance. And whoever leaves his home as an emigrant to Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him - his reward has already become incumbent upon Allah. And Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:100).

Intentions define actions, even if they were sinful acts. The prophet (PBUH) says: “When two Muslims engage in combat against each other and one is killed, both are doomed to Hell.” Someone asked: “Oh Messenger of Allah! As to the one who kills, it is understandable, but why the slain one?” He replied: “He was eager to kill his opponent.”⁽²⁾ Another example of how intentions define actions is the distinction between premeditated murder and involuntary manslaughter. Premeditated murder is a sin that leads to eternal damnation. Allah says: “Whoever kills a believer intentionally - his recompense is Hell, wherein he will abide eternally, and Allah has become angry with him and has cursed him and has prepared for him a great punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 4:93). Conversely, involuntary manslaughter is not a sin because there was no intention to kill. Rather, anyone who kills by mistake compensates the family of the victim and makes up for the error. Allah says: “Never is it for a believer to kill a believer except by mistake. And whoever kills a believer by mistake - then the freeing of a believing slave and a compensation presented to the deceased’s family [is required] unless they give [up their right as] charity. But if the deceased was from a people at war with you and he was a believer - then [only] the freeing of a believing slave; and if he was from a people with whom you have a treaty - then a compensation payment presented to his family and the freeing of a believing slave. And whoever does not find [one or cannot afford to buy one] - then [instead], a fast for two months consecutively, [seeking] acceptance of repentance from Allah. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise” (Holy Qur’an, 4:92). Carrying out a death sentence on behalf of the community or the state is also an act of killing,

(1) Narrated via Omar by Al-Bukhari on the beginning of the revelations (1), Muslim on leadership (1907), Ahmed (168), Abu Dawud on divorce (2201), Al-Tirmidhi on jihad (1647), Al-Nassa’i on purification (75), and Ibn Majah on asceticism.

(2) Narrated via Abu Bakrah by Al-Bukhari on faith (31) and Muslim on social strife (2888).

but it is a form of serving justice, and it is not considered a sin. Allah says: “There is for you in legal retribution [saving of] life, Oh you [people] of understanding, that you may become righteous” (Holy Qur’an, 2:179).

Observing Allah

Observing Allah means having Allah on one’s mind to make sure one’s actions are performed in the best way possible. When the angel Gabriel asked the Prophet (PBUH) about human perfection, he replied: “Human perfection is to worship Allah as if you see Him. If you do not achieve this state of devotion, then (take it for granted that) Allah sees you.”⁽¹⁾ This pursuit of perfection applies to all human actions, whether they are acts of worship directed toward Allah or any of the everyday actions we perform. A perfect example of this moral ideal is going above and beyond the call of duty when serving Islam. This is a religious requirement that a group of people volunteer to perform on behalf of the Ummah, while the majority are either bystanders or detractors. Those who take on this duty are volunteers who have no supervisors or administrators to oversee their work. Those volunteers have only Allah to answer to and they hold themselves accountable for everything they do. They know that Allah “is with you wherever you are. And Allah, of what you do, is Seeing” (Holy Qur’an, 57:4).

Self-Accountability

Intentions precede actions, whereas observing Allah takes place while performing actions. Holding oneself accountable starts immediately when an action is completed. This accountability is what the Prophet (PBUH) meant when he said: “A wise man is one who calls himself to account and does noble deeds to benefit him after death. A foolish person is one who subdues himself to his temptations and desires and seeks from Allah the fulfillment of his vain desires”⁽²⁾ Omar also said: “Hold yourselves accountable before you are held accountable [before Allah].”⁽³⁾ Maymun Ibn Mahran also said: “He who fears Allah holds himself accountable more strictly than a tyrant would hold his subjects accountable and more so than a selfish businessman holding his partners accountable.”⁽⁴⁾

Holding oneself accountable motivates people to do their very best in every-thing they do. It also helps them reflect on their actions and seek new ways to improve

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (50) and Muslim (9), both on faith.

(2) Narrated via Shaddad Ibn Aws by Ahmed (weak; 17123), Al-Tirmidhi in descriptions of the Day of Judgment (sound; 2459), Ibn Majah on asceticism (4260), and Al-Hakim on repentance (4/280).

(3) Narrated by Ibn Abi Shaybah in his book on asceticism (35600).

(4) Narrated by Ibn Asakir in *Tārīkh Dimashq* (The History of Damascus), 61/353.

themselves. Perhaps, the most important function of self-accountability is that it drives people to pursue human perfection and it discourages vanity and pride. This is why self-accountability is at the core of Sufi teachings and Islamic education.

Today, we see a lot of the literature on self-improvement using the terms “self-evaluation”, which is just a synonym for self-accountability. The issue is not that the term is being promoted in modern psychology. Rather, the issue is that many among us think it is a new concept imported from the West, and forget that it is the same concept the Holy Qur’an and Sunnah have been promoting for centuries.

Reliance On Allah

To rely on Allah is to have full trust in Him and to depend on Him to overcome all hardships. This reliance stems from firm belief in Allah’s words:

- *“If Allah should aid you, no one can overcome you; but if He should forsake you, who is there that can aid you after Him? And upon Allah let the believers rely” (Holy Qur’an, 3:160).*
- *“Whoever relies upon Allah - then He is sufficient for him” (Holy Qur’an, 65:3).*
- *“Allah is sufficient as Trustee” (Holy Qur’an, 4:81).*
- *“But whoever relies upon Allah - then indeed, Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise” (Holy Qur’an 8:49).*

Those who seek refuge in Allah are never defeated, for He is the Powerful, and those who submit to His plans are never misguided, for He is the Wise. This is the message of all the prophets who faced the most brutal of tyrants. Allah says: “Why should we not rely upon Allah while He has guided us to our [good] ways. And we will surely be patient against whatever harm you should cause us. And upon Allah let those who would rely [indeed] rely” (Holy Qur’an 4:12).

Reliance on Allah is sometimes misunderstood as a form of passive fatalism. The truth about reliance on Allah is explained in the Sunnah. One of the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions asked him, “Oh Messenger of Allah! Shall I tie my camel and rely on Allah, or let it loose and rely on Allah?” The Prophet (PBUH) responded: “Tie it and rely on Allah.”⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) was a role model of this moral value. When it was time for him to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, he prepared all the things needed for the journey. He also used various strategies to evade those who pursued him. He had everything well prepared: the camels, the company,

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Tirmidhi on the Day of Judgment (2517), Abu Nuaym in *Hilyat Al-Awliyā’* (8/390), and Al-Albani on poverty (22).

and the guide before he set off. He even chose an uncommonly taken route, a cave where they could hide, and trusted people to bring provisions and hide their traces. Despite all these preparations, the unbelievers who pursued him made it to the cave. This is when Abu Bakr, who accompanied him on that journey, said to him: “Oh Messenger of Allah! If any of them looks down, he will definitely see us.” The Prophet responded calmly: “Oh Abu Bakr! What do you think of two men in the company of Allah? Have no fear, for Allah is with us.”⁽¹⁾

Loving Allah

When we talk about how the faithful love Allah, we talk about an inherent and deep kind of real love. There are no metaphors here; it is true love. Allah has created mankind for the sole purpose of worshipping Him: “I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (Holy Qur’an, 51:56). The essence of worship is a mix of two elements: pure love and complete submission. A faithful person loves Allah because Allah is the essence of beauty and perfection, both of which are attributes we were created to love and to be attracted to. Moreover, a faithful person loves Allah because Allah is the Creator of the universe and the source of everything we like: “Whatever you have of favor - it is from Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 16:53). It is only a human instinct to love those who help us and give to us. We love our parents because they are the reason we are alive, let alone Allah, who is the source of all existence.

Imam Al-Ghazali draws our attention to another reason why the faithful love Allah. In his *Revival*, Imam Ghazali reminds us that Allah is the source of our essence: “I have proportioned him and breathed into him of My spirit” (Holy Qur’an, 15:29). Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) also says: “Allah created Adam in his image.”⁽²⁾ Of course, this hadith is not about the physical appearance of Adam, since Allah is beyond images and appearances: “There is nothing like Him” (Holy Qur’an, 42:11). Rather, this hadith is about the attributes of Allah that He has blessed mankind with to distinguish them from all other species, such as having will power, reason, and the ability to speak, among others. These divine powers are manifested on a much smaller scale in our human form, and they are the secret behind our love for their source and our desire to get closer to Him. Allah says: “Whosoever approaches Me by one span, I will approach him by one cubit; and whosoever approaches Me by one cubit, I approach him by one fathom.”⁽³⁾

One of Allah’s divine attributes is the Loving as stated in “He is the Forgiving, the Loving” (Holy Qur’an, 85:14). This is why the Holy Qur’an reminds us in

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4663), Muslim on the Prophet’s companions (6319), Ahmed (12), and Al-Tirmidhi on exegesis (3096).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hyrayrah by Al-Bukhari (6227) and Muslim on kinship relations (2841).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hyrayrah by Al-Bukhari on monotheism (7405) and Muslim on repentance (2675).

many contexts that Allah loves the faithful, who are just, patient, and pure. Allah says: “Indeed, Allah loves those who revere Him” (Holy Qur’an, 3:76). Allah also describes the faithful as those who hold on to their faith when others revert: “Oh you who have believed, whoever of you should revert from his religion – Allah will bring forth [in their stead] a people He will love and who will love Him” (Holy Qur’an, 5:54). This mutual love between Allah and the faithful is the love that He created and initiated. The connection between faith and love is clearly stated in the verse: “Those who believe are stronger in love for Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 2:165).

Loving Allah is not just a phrase that one pays lip service to. It is an overwhelming emotion that shapes every action and every interaction. The first sign of this love is obedience toward Allah and His Prophet (PBUH). Those who love obey. Allah instructs the Prophet (PBUH) to tell the faithful: “If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so that] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins” (Holy Qur’an, 3:32). Those who love Allah also love others who share the same feeling. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Three qualities, whoever possesses them finds the joy of faith: to have Allah and His Prophet dearer to him than anything else, to love others only for Allah’s sake, and to hate reverting to disbelief as much as one hates to be thrown into the fire.”⁽¹⁾ Another sign of devotion for Allah is favoring Him over everything and everyone, including family, wealth, homeland, and all the pleasures of the world. Allah says: “Say, [Oh Mohammed] ‘If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your wives, your relatives, wealth which you have obtained, commerce wherein you fear decline, and dwellings with which you are pleased are more beloved to you than Allah and His Messenger and jihad in His cause, then wait until Allah executes His command. And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people’” (Holy Qur’an, 9:24).

Fear Of Allah

This is not the same kind of fear one feels when oppressed by an unjust tyrant. This is a feeling that comes about when one realizes how powerless we are compared to the Almighty Allah, Who sees everything we do and knows everything we think about. This fear is also generated by our sense of responsibility, because we will all be held accountable before Allah for everything we do. Allah says: “It is the Day when a soul will not possess [the power to do anything] for another soul; and the command, that Day, is [entirely] with Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 81:19).

Thus, Allah describes His servants who fear Him as those “who fear their Lord without seeing Him, while they are apprehensive of the Hour” (Holy Qur’an, 21:49). It is those faithful people who say: “Indeed, we fear from our Lord a Day

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (16), Muslim (43), Ahmed (13592), and Al-Tirmidhi (2624).

austere and distressful” (Holy Qur’an, 76:10); and who “are apprehensive from fear of their Lord. And they who believe in the signs of their Lord. And they who do not associate anything with their Lord. And they give what they give while their hearts are fearful because they will be returning to their Lord” (Holy Qur’an, 23:57-60). Aisha asked the Prophet (PBUH) about that last verse and whether those whose “hearts are fearful” are the people who fear Allah because they commit vile sins, such as stealing, adultery, and drinking alcohol. He corrected her by saying: “No Aisha, it is about those who pray, fast, and give to *Zakat*, while their hearts fear Allah.”⁽¹⁾

Hope For Allah’s Mercy

This hope establishes a balance with fear. Hope for forgiveness and mercy does not allow fear to take over, which could result in resignation and despair. Allah says: “No one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people” (Holy Qur’an, 18:87). At the same time, fear does not allow hope to take over to the point of taking mercy and forgiveness for granted: “Then did they feel secure from the plan of Allah? But no one feels secure from the plan of Allah except the losing people” (Holy Qur’an, 7:99). These two values help establish the balance that leads to salvation as described in: “Is one who is devoutly obedient during the night, prostrating and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord, [like one who does not]? Say, ‘Are those who know equal to those who do not know?’ Only they will remember [who are] people of understanding” (Holy Qur’an, 39:9).

This hope comes from a deeply rooted belief that no matter how many or how grave one’s sins are, Allah’s mercy can wipe them all away. Allah says: “Say, ‘Oh My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful’” (Holy Qur’an, 39:53). In this verse, Allah addresses those who commit sins as “Oh My servants”, for they are still His servants despite their sins. This idea is reiterated in several verses, including:

- *“Nothing is said to you, [Oh Mohammed], except what was already said to the messengers before you. Indeed, your Lord is the possessor of forgiveness and the possessor of painful penalty” (Holy Qur’an, 41:43).*
- *“[Oh Mohammed], inform My servants that it is I who am the Forgiving, the Merciful and that it is My punishment which is the painful punishment” (Holy Qur’an, 15:49-50).*

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (weak for discontinuous references; 25263), Al-Tirmidhi on exegesis (3175), Ibn Majah on asceticism (4198), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Tirmidhi* (corrected; 2537).

- *"The forgiver of sin, acceptor of repentance, severe in punishment, owner of abundance. There is no deity except Him; to Him is the destination" (Holy Qur'an, 40:3).*

Gratitude

Gratitude is a feeling of appreciation that comes from recognizing that everything we have is a blessing from Allah, Whose blessings cannot be enumerated:

- *"Whatever you have of favor - it is from Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 16:53).*
- *"If you should count the favors of Allah, you could not enumerate them" (Holy Qur'an, 14:34).*
- *"Do you not see that Allah has made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?" (Holy Qur'an, 31:20).*

Those feelings of gratitude are expressed by verbally thanking Allah for his favors. Allah says: "And [it is He] Who created all the species, all of them, and has made for you ships and animals which you ride - That you may settle yourselves upon their backs and then remember the favor of your Lord when you have settled upon them and say, 'Exalted is He who has subjected this to us, and we could not have [otherwise] subdued it'" (Holy Qur'an, 43:12-13). This is why Muslims say this prayer whenever they take any form of transportation.

Gratitude is a feeling that is not only expressed in words, but also in actions. Actions reflect gratitude when one uses Allah's favors to serve Him rather than to disobey Him or hurt others. Allah says: "Eat from the provisions of your Lord and be grateful to Him. A good land [you have], and a forgiving Lord" (Holy Qur'an, 34:15). Gratitude makes one worthy of Allah's favors, and thus they increase: "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favor]; but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe" (Holy Qur'an, 14:7). The Holy Qur'an gives us many examples of ingrates who fell out of Allah's favor because they took it for granted and refused to be thankful for them: "We repaid them because they disbelieved. And do We [thus] repay except the ungrateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 34:17). The Holy Qur'an also gives many examples of those who appreciate Allah's favors and express their gratitude in words and actions, such as King Solomon who said: "My Lord, enable me to be grateful for Your favor which You have bestowed upon me and upon my parents and to do righteousness of which You approve. And admit me by Your mercy into [the ranks of] Your righteous servants" (Holy Qur'an, 27:19).

Patience

Patience is a moral value that complements gratitude. Life has both hard and good times. During good times, one needs to be grateful for Allah's blessings, whereas in hard times, one needs to patiently endure. We see this relation between gratitude and patience in many verses in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says: "Indeed in that are signs for everyone who is patient and grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 14:5). We see the same pattern in the Sunnah. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Strange are the ways of the believers, for there is good in all their affairs. This is not the case with anyone else except the believers who thank Allah in good times; thus gain blessings, and in hard times, they endure patiently; thus, they gain blessings."⁽¹⁾

Patience is a virtue when people have their faith tested: "We will surely test you with fear, hunger, and a loss of wealth, lives, and fruits, but give good tidings to those who are patient, who, when disaster strikes, say: 'Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:155-156). It is also a virtue when persevering in worshipping Allah: "Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them - so worship Him and have patience for His worship. Do you know of any similarity to Him?" (Holy Qur'an, 19:65).

All prophets were role models of patience. Ismail was patient when his father asked him if he could offer him as a sacrifice to Allah. Ismail's faith was tested, but he said: "Oh my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me patient, if Allah wills" (Holy Qur'an, 37:102). The prophets also endured patiently when the unbelievers harmed them. Allah addresses Prophet Mohammed (PBUH): "Oh you who covers himself [with a garment], arise and warn, and your Lord glorify, and your clothing purify, and uncleanness avoid. Do not confer favor to acquire more, but for your Lord be patient" (Holy Qur'an, 74:1-7); and "Be patient, [Oh Mohammed], as were those of determination among the messengers and do not be impatient for them [the unbelievers]" (Holy Qur'an, 46:35). The Holy Qur'an also tells us how the prophets told their peoples that they would be patient with them: "We will surely be patient against whatever harm you should cause us" (Holy Qur'an, 14:12).

Allah warns the faithful that those who call people to Allah's path inevitably face hardships: "You will surely be tested in your possessions and in yourselves. And you will surely hear much abuse from those who were given the Scripture before you and from those who worship others with Allah. But if you are patient and fear Allah - indeed, that is the matter [worthy] of determination" (Holy Qur'an, 3:186). The faithful also need to be patient with themselves as they resist temptations, such as the urge to take revenge: "If you punish [an enemy, Oh believ-

(1) Narrated vis Suhayb by Muslim on asceticism (6792) and Ahmed (18934).

ers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient" (Holy Qur'an, 16:126).

Repentance

Repentance is going back to Allah and asking Him for forgiveness. Allah created people only to worship Him, but with sins people stray off the straight path. With repentance, people correct themselves and go back to the straight path. Allah commands us: "Turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed" (Holy Qur'an, 24:31). We are not angels, and we do err, because of our mixed nature that has a physical element that pulls us down to the earth and a spiritual element that wants us to rise to the sky. This mixed nature leaves us constantly torn between the push and pull of our instinctive needs for materialism and spirituality, hence it is only human to err. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Oh people! Repent to Allah. I repent to Him a hundred times every day."⁽¹⁾

As people go on their journeys to Allah, they feel the greatness of Allah's favors and the insignificance of their deeds toward Allah. This feeling makes us feel negligent of our duties and in need for going back to Allah, which we should always do before our sins pile up. When sins increase, our hearts become rusty and resistant to faith. Allah says: "No! Rather, the stain has covered their hearts of that which they were earning" (Holy Qur'an, 83:14). Allah's door is always open for us to repent. He extends His hand during the night for those who sin in the day to repent, and during the day for those who sin in the night to repent.⁽²⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) says: "By the One in Whose Hand my soul is! If you do not commit sins, Allah would replace you with a people who would commit sins and seek His forgiveness; and Allah will certainly forgive them,"⁽³⁾ and "All humans sin, and the best of those who sin are the ones who repent."⁽⁴⁾

It is no surprise that humans err. We have all erred since Adam when he ate from the Forbidden Tree, but he repented and was forgiven: "Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers" (Holy Qur'an, 7:23); and "Then Adam received from his Lord [some] words, and He accepted his repentance. Indeed, it is He who is the Accepting of repentance, the Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 2:37). What is surprising is how people persist in sin and thus wrong themselves: "Whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers" (Holy Qur'an, 49:45).

(1) Narrated via Al-Aghar Ibn Yasar Al-Muzani by Muslim on remembrance of Allah and supplications (2702), Ahmed (18291), and Abu Dawud on prayers (1515).

(2) See hadith narrated via Abu Musa by Muslim in repentance (2759) and Ahmed (19529).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on repentance (2759) and Ahmed (8082).

(4) Narrated via Anas by Ahmed (weak references; 13049), Al-Tirmidhi on the Day of Judgment (2499), Ibn Majah on asceticism (4251), and Al-Albani in *Al-Mishkâh* (2341).

What every faithful person needs is to repent sincerely: “Oh you who have believed, repent to Allah with sincerity” (Holy Qur’an, 66:8). Repenting sincerely comes with an overwhelming sense of regret for what happened and determination not to do it again. Sincere repentance renews faith and wipes away all sins: “Those who repent, believe, and do righteous work, for them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good ones. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 25:70).

Reverence

All the moral values we have discussed thus far can be combined in revering Allah, which is a sense of awe and devotion. This reverence is what Allah has commanded all people to do: “We have instructed those who were given the Scripture before you and yourselves to revere Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 4: 31). Life is a journey, and the best provision to help one survive the journey is revering Allah: “Take provisions, but indeed, the best provision is revering Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 2:197). This moral value in particular is often used in the Holy Qur’an in verses that state divine commandments because it is the force that translates beliefs into actions.

Revering Allah is not about words that people can utter or rituals they can perform. It is all about the heart being at peace with itself and Allah. It is also about that unshakable belief that Allah is the ultimate truth and that we will definitely see Him. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah does not look at your figures, or at your attire, but He looks at your hearts.” He then pointed to his chest, and said three times, “Reverence is here.”⁽¹⁾

Revering Allah is a very powerful feeling and it generates all sorts of behavioral patterns, such as doing as much good as possible and trying hard to avoid sins. Those who revere Allah are the ones “who believe in the unseen, establish prayer, and spend [in charity] out of what We have provided for them” (Holy Qur’an, 2:3), and “who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain their anger and pardon people. And Allah loves the doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 3:134).

Those who reach the status of reverence are not infallible, but once they commit an error, they quickly remember Allah and rush back to the straight path: “Indeed, those who revere Allah - when an impulse touches them from Satan, they remember Him and at once they have insight” (Holy Qur’an, 7:201). Those are the people who “when they commit an immoral act or wrong themselves [by transgression], remember Allah and seek forgiveness for their sins - and who can forgive sins

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on kinship ties (2564).

except Allah? - and [who] do not persist in what they have done while they know. Their reward is forgiveness from their Lord and gardens beneath which rivers flow [in Paradise], wherein they will abide eternally; and excellent is the reward of the [righteous] workers” (Holy Qur’an, 3:135-136). Revering Allah is rewarded in many ways. Allah says:

- *“Oh you who have believed, if you revere Allah, He will grant you a criterion” (Holy Qur’an, 8:29).*
- *“Whoever reveres Allah - He will make for him a way out and provide for him from where he does not expect” (Holy Qur’an, 65:2-3).*
- *“Whoever reveres Allah - He will make for him of his matter ease” (Holy Qur’an, 65:4).*
- *“Whoever reveres Allah - He will remove for him his misdeeds and make great for him his reward” (Holy Qur’an, 65:5).*

4.1.1 Review Of Some Westerners’ And Orientalists’ Perspectives On Divine Ethics In Islam

Some orientalist scholars have claimed that Islamic ethics has severe consequences for the individual, because they are saturated with submissiveness and fatalism, both of which are encoded in the name “Islam” itself. This view assumes that an individual who is overwhelmed with emotions toward a tyrant god inevitably relies on this god completely, relinquishing free will in the process. Therefore, such an individual cannot be motivated to act in the same way as someone who is intrinsically motivated by a free moral conscious.⁽¹⁾ Others see Islam as a religion that establishes a slave-master relationship between the individual and the divine, a relationship that offers nothing to the individual but humiliation, submissiveness, and the lack of willpower. There is another set of Orientalist views on Islam that see it as a religion based entirely on fear of a tyrant god. These views claim that this constant state of fear has negative psychological effects on Muslims. What all these perspectives have in common is that they are based on personal interpretations that have nothing to do with the Holy Qur’an, the Sunnah, or Islamic scholarship.

Our disagreement with these perspectives is epistemic in nature, because we have different definitions of divinity and humanity. We see divinity and humanity as described in the Holy Qur’an. Humans are not gods to do as they please, and they are not animals without intellect or free will either. Humans are created by

(1) See *An Interpretation of Islam* by Laura Veccia Vaglieri, 1957.

Allah and given a special status among all species. They were chosen by Allah to be in charge of the earth and to be ruled by the laws of life and death. As for divinity, we see Allah as He describes Himself in the Holy Qur'an.

Being A Slave To Allah Is True Freedom

Anyone who reads and studies the Holy Qur'an has no problem being described as a servant or a slave of Allah. We are servants and slaves to Allah, for He created us and His laws dictate everything in our lives, including our health, wealth, sickness, strength, and death. Appreciating the nature of this relationship frees the individual from slavery and servitude to all others, whether people, ideologies, or oneself. What ruined the human experience is their enslaving each other and choosing to be slaves to each other. People have chosen others to be their Gods, not in the religious sense, but in the sense of blindly following leaders, whether they are political leaders, religious leaders, or other celebrities. In Islam, there is no Allah but Allah. This is why the Prophet (PBUH) used to end his letters to the kings and Caesars of Christian kingdoms with the verses: "Say, 'O People of the Book, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah'. But if they turn away, then say, 'Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him]'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:64).

Laura Veccia Vaglieri's Defense Of Islamic Ethics

In her defense of Islamic ethics, Laura Veccia Vaglieri writes: "Islam was not only not an obstacle to moral perfection; since it possessed in itself an efficient strength directed toward good deeds, it succeeded, earlier than other religions, in educating and raising men toward Allah. Islam succeeded because it was not less concerned for the moral responsibility of its members than other monotheistic religions whose prophets Mohammed (PBUH) recognized as his teachers, but in certain respects it was even more concerned than they, because it counted on human weakness and exhorted its believers toward ideals within their reach. The same virtues which Judaism and Christianity present as the supreme end of the moral life of man, are not only set forth but are even prescribed as ideals in Islam.⁽¹⁾ This is true of the ideals of mercy toward all creatures, understanding, forgiveness, simplicity, fitness in social contacts, acceptance of misfortunes, and so on. Qur'anic statements stressing good deeds can be found by the thousand."⁽²⁾

(1) Muslims are required to act according to these ideals as much as they possible can to purify themselves and reach the state of those who "said, «Our Lord is Allah» and then remained on a right course" (Holy Qur'an, 41:30).

(2) *Interpretation of Islam* by Laura Veccia Vaglieri, 1957, page 55.

A famous tradition says: "There is no monasticism in Islam".⁽¹⁾ As a matter of fact, Islam does not care for asceticism with its useless mortification of the flesh, its unnecessary privations as well as its continuous fasts and nights spent in prayer. In regard to marriage, the Islamic tradition asks for no more than an honest and constructive life in which the individual follows the middle of the road, remembering Allah on the one side and respecting, on the other, the rights and needs of the body, family, and society.

The Prophet (PBUH) said to a too fervent youngster [Amr Ibn Al-As]: "Your body has its rights, your wife has her rights, and your guest has his rights. Give each their rights."⁽²⁾ To the one who one day asked his advice about alms, he said: "Give one-third, because one-third is already enough. It is better to leave your descendants provided for than to compel them to go begging."⁽³⁾ Strict celibacy is the subject of severe criticism in Islam, and it is against the customs established by Mohammed.⁽⁴⁾

While Islam categorically forbids adultery, it allows legal marriage and even encourages people to get married. It also prohibits excessive monasticism. Anas reports that some of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions were talking about the special acts of worship they intended to perform. One said: "I will abstain and never get married." Another said: "I will fast every day." A third said: "I will pray all night every night." The Prophet (PBUH) commented: "I know more about Allah than all of you. However, I observe prayers and sleep; I observe fast and I break it; I marry women, too. He who turns away from my Sunnah has no relation with Me."⁽⁵⁾

Vaglieri continues her argument: "The limitations upon the enjoyment of life which Islam has imposed on its followers are but few, are equal for all, and show great wisdom. Today when a severe battle is being fought in the Western world against alcoholism and when the West tries to limit gambling by means of prohibitions and limitations, can anybody blame Islam for having banged shut these two 'doors of danger' for these causes of corruption both of the spirit and of wealth?"⁽⁶⁾

The Prophet's Sunnah And Its Role In Islamic Life

"The Muslim tradition brings to us a most beautiful definition of mercy and charity, coupled with a most delicate definition of moral concepts. It is well known that

(1) The author is correct to note that this is a traditional saying rather than a hadith.

(2) Narrated via Amr Ibn Al-As by Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1159), both on fasting.

(3) Narrated via Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas by Al-Bukhari (2742), Muslim (1628), Ahmed (1440), and Al-Nassa'i (3627).

(4) *Interpretation of Islam* by Laura Veccia Vaglieri, 1957, page 64.

(5) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (5063) and Muslim (1401), both on marriage.

(6) Ibid, 65.

the lines of the Holy Qur'an, which taken alone would not have been sufficient to regulate all human life in its various contingencies, have been continued, supplemented and brought to fulfilment by a mass of traditional sayings which go back to the Prophet (PBUH). It matters little if in respect of some of these sayings the question of authenticity and of antiquity is raised. Even if we grant that they do not all go back to Mohammed (PBUH) himself, yet the majority embody the spirit of the ancient Muslim community which had blended together in itself the real spirit of Islam, and they bring to us the concepts and aspirations of that community."⁽¹⁾

"Tradition is the strongest support for a healthy conception of life. Here we repeat what we have said already when we spoke of traditions which contain the highest moral concept! What does it matter if somebody does raise the question of authenticity? The Muslim world accepts these traditional sayings today as true and for the most part follow their instructions."⁽²⁾

The Religion People Would Prefer

Vaglieri raises an interesting point when she writes: "Men feel the need of a religion, but at the same time they want it to answer their needs, and they want it to be not only close to their sentiments but to offer tranquility and security for the other life as well as for this. Islam answers these prerequisites perfectly, for it is not only a creed but also a philosophy of life. It teaches right thinking, proper acting, and honest speaking, and for these reasons it finds its way to both the mind and the heart of man without difficulty."⁽³⁾

She takes charity as an example of Islamic ethics, as she writes: "All religions have recognized in some measure the great moral and social importance of giving alms and have recommended it as a tangible expression of charity, and as a suitable way to seek the benevolence of Allah. Only Islam, however, has the glory of having made it compulsory, translating into prescription and thus into reality, the teaching of Christ. Each Muslim is by law compelled to contribute a portion of his wealth for the benefit of the poor, those in need, travelers, strangers, etc. By fulfilling this religious duty, he experiences a deeper sense of humanity, purifies his soul of avarice, and begins to cherish hope of divine reward."⁽⁴⁾

Vaglieri's analysis of the moral functions of alms giving and charity is quite fair and accurate. It is one of the aspects that distinguish Islam from other religions, because it not only encourages people to give to *Zakat* leaving it to their

(1) Ibid, 61.

(2) Ibid, 63-64.

(3) Ibid, 65.

(4) Ibid, 50-51.

conscience, but it also makes it part of social organization and one of the religion's foundations (the Five Pillars of Islam). Thus, Islam maintains the moral values associated with giving to charity in three ways: (a) faith, which intrinsically motivates people to give; (b) social pressure, as people would encourage each other to give; and (c) the social authority entrusted with collecting and distributing alms. Moreover, Islam specifies the sources and amounts of *Zakat*, which not only establishes the minimum, but also makes it possible to hold people accountable.⁽¹⁾

Vaglieri uses *Hajj* as another example of the wisdom embedded in Islamic ethics. She writes: "Each Muslim, if certain conditions are fulfilled, has the obligation to make a pilgrimage to Makkah at least once in his lifetime. The profound forces which are hidden in this prescription are of such a nature that the human mind can scarcely embrace them, yet those which are easily intelligible reveal perfect wisdom. No one can deny the advantage which comes to Islam through the annual reunion in one place of Muslims coming from all parts of the world: Arabs, Persians, Afghans, Indians, people from the Malay Peninsula, people from Maghreb and Sudan, and others all converge upon the sacred temple for the sole purpose of asking forgiveness from their merciful Allah. Meeting each other in such a place for such a purpose they forge new ties of love and brotherhood.

At least once in the life of a Muslim, all differences between rich and poor, between beggar and Emir, are completely obliterated. For, during the period of the holy ceremonies, everyone wears the same very simple clothes, everyone leaves his own personal ornaments behind, and everyone, has only one watchword, "Allahu-Akbar" (Allah is great). The rituals which the pilgrims have to fulfil, such as going around the house of Allah (Ka'bah), the reunion near mount Arafat, and the sacrifice at Mina, awaken in him the remembrance of the great prophets and patriarchs of the past who have been in the same places. They bring to life again the deeds of Abraham, the founder of the pure religion, and of his son Ishmael and his wife Hagar. They awaken in the pilgrim the desire of imitating them in their compassion and their submission to the will of Allah."⁽²⁾

Islam As A Comprehensive Balanced Program

Islam is a program designed by Allah so that Muslims, as individuals and community, would follow it throughout their lives. Allah says: "Indeed this, your religion, is one religion, and I am your Lord, so worship Me" (Holy Qur'an, 21:92). Islam offers detailed teachings that serve as guidelines for living from the moment of

(1) For more details on the philosophy and rulings of Islam on *Zakat*, please see *Fiqh Al-Zakat* by Yusuf Al-Qaradawi.

(2) *Interpretation of Islam* by Laura Veccia Vaglieri, 1957, page 51-52.

birth to death. For example, there are teachings on how to choose a baby's name and how to offer sacrifice on behalf of a newborn, among others.⁽¹⁾ From the moment of birth onward, Islam accompanies the individual in all situations: at work, at home, in good health, in sickness, and in every single aspect of life. These teachings also cover interactions between the individual and Allah, the family, neighbors, society, and even those from other nations and other religions. These guidelines are binding, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: "None of you [truly] believes until his desires match what I have been sent with."⁽²⁾ He also says: "Three qualities; whoever possesses them finds the joy of faith: to have Allah and his Prophet dearer to him than anything else; to love others only for Allah's sake; and to hate reverting to disbelief as much as one hates to be thrown into the fire."⁽³⁾ Thus, the ultimate goal is for the individual to have every word, action, thought, or emotion in accordance with Allah's rule, not because there is a sword hanging over one's head, but because it is the truth.

(1) See *Tuhfat Al-Wadūd fī Ahkām Al-Mawlūd* by Ibn Al-Qayyim.

(2) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Abu Asim on the Sunnah (15), Ibn Battah (279), Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Madkhal lil-Sunan Al-Kubrā* (209), and Al-Hafidh in *Fatḥ Al-Bārī* (13/289).

(3) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (16), Muslim (43), Ahmed (13592), and Al-Tirmidhi (2624).

4.2 Individual Ethics

Islam calls on people to adopt a series of practical moral values that are necessary for material, spiritual, individual, social, and even global well-being. These moral values can be classified into two categories: divine ethics, which regulates human behavior toward Allah, and human ethics, which regulates one's interactions with other individuals and other creatures. Human ethics is typically classified into individual, social, national, and global ethics.

The main function of Islamic ethics is to help individuals rise above their animalistic instincts by instilling moral values, such as justice, honesty, truthfulness, forgiveness, humility, and kindness, among others. While these classifications are necessary from a theoretical perspective, in reality, it is very difficult to separate individual ethics from social ethics. In the sections below, I will present each category and discuss how it relates to the others.

Individual ethics concerns the moral behavior of the individual toward people, other species, and inanimate objects. It also concerns our moral behavior toward other beings that we cannot perceive of directly, such as the jinn. The jinn are rational beings created to worship Allah, to follow His messengers, and to serve Him. They are also rewarded or punished for their actions in the same way as we are. Allah says: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me. I do not want from them any provision, nor do I want them to feed Me" (Holy Qur'an, 51:56-57). Other beings are not accountable in the same way as humans and the jinn are, such as the angels who were created from light. Angels do not have doubts and they do not sin. Allah says: "They exalt [Him] night and day [and] do not get tired" (Holy Qur'an, 21:20); "He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they cannot intercede except on behalf of one of whom He approves. And they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive" (Holy Qur'an, 21:28); and "They [the angels] do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and do as they are commanded" (Holy Qur'an, 66:6).

While we do not interact with the jinn or the angels and we do not perceive of them, we are required to believe that they exist. Allah says: "The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying]: 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers'. And they say: 'We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:285).

4.2.1. The Ethics Of Human-Human Interaction

As we have discussed in the previous sections, human ethics falls into various categories depending on the target of moral behavior. In this section, we will discuss

the ethics of human interactions. We believe that there are other types of creatures that we do not perceive of, because they are created from different matter, such as angels. We learned from the prophets that angels were created of light, and their only function is to worship Allah:

- *"They exalt [Him] night and day [and] do not get tired" (Holy Qur'an, 21:20).*
- *"He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they cannot intercede except on behalf of one of whom He approves. And they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive" (Holy Qur'an, 21:28).*
- *"They [the angels] do not disobey Allah in what He commands them and do as they are commanded" (Holy Qur'an, 66:6).*

Angels were created before humans, as Allah tells us that He spoke with them before creating Adam: "Mention [Oh Mohammed], when your Lord said to the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority'. They said: 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' Allah said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:30). Thus, Allah created Adam and his wife, and their children have populated the far corners of the earth. Then, Allah sent his prophets to people so that they would have no excuse. People have always erred, for it is only human to err, but the door is always open for repentance. Allah says: "Adam disobeyed his Lord and erred. Then, his Lord chose him and turned to him in forgiveness and guided [him]. [Allah] said: 'Descend from Paradise - all, [your descendants] being enemies to one another. And if there should come to you guidance from Me - then whoever follows My guidance will neither go astray [in the world] nor suffer [in the Hereafter]. And whoever turns away from My remembrance - indeed, he will have a depressing life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind'. He will say: 'My Lord, why have you raised me blind while I was [once] seeing?' [Allah] will say: 'Thus did Our signs come to you, and you forgot them; and thus will you this Day be forgotten'" (Holy Qur'an, 20:121-126).

Humans have been entrusted with three functions.⁽¹⁾ The first is to worship Allah alone, follow His orders, and abide by His rule. Allah says: "I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me" (Holy Qur'an, 51:56). The second function is to develop the earth and enjoy its beauty. Prophet Saleh told his people: "He has produced you from the earth and settled you on it" (Holy Qur'an, 11:61). The third function is to serve as Allah's successors in establishing justice: "And [mention, Oh Mohammed], when your Lord said to the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority'. They said: 'Will You place upon it

(1) See *Tafṣīl Al-Nash'atayn* by Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani. Beirut: Dar Maktabat Al-Hayah, 1983, 48.

one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?’ Allah said: ‘Indeed, I know that which you do not know’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:30).

From the very beginning of human history, it became necessary to have moral guidelines and rules that determine how people should interact with each other. The first conflict was between Adam’s sons: “Recite to them the story of Adam’s two sons, in truth, when they both offered a sacrifice [to Allah], and it was accepted from one of them but was not accepted from the other. Said [the latter]: ‘I will surely kill you’. Said [the former]: ‘Indeed, Allah only accepts from the righteous [who fear Him]. If you should raise your hand against me to kill me – I shall not raise my hand against you to kill you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds. Indeed I want you to obtain [thereby] my sin and your sin so you will be among the companions of the Fire. And that is the recompense of wrongdoers’. And his soul permitted to him the murder of his brother, so he killed him and became among the losers. Then Allah sent a crow searching in the ground to show him how to hide the disgrace of his brother. He said: ‘Oh woe to me! Have I failed to be like this crow and hide the body of my brother?’ And he became regretful” (Holy Qur’an, 5:27-31).

This story summarizes the dual nature of humanity. Cain had no society around him to teach him murder or encourage him to act violently. It was his jealousy that led him to this heinous crime. He introduced murder to this world, and thus the Prophet (PBUH) says: “The first son of Adam takes a share of the guilt of every one who murders another because he was the initiator of murder.”⁽¹⁾ Ethics is what saves us from committing such regrettable acts.

Ethics toward others encourages us to do right by others, support them in good causes, and to call on them to act morally. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A believer to another believer is like a building whose different parts enforce each other.”⁽²⁾ This co-operation on good causes is a moral ideal that promotes justice within society, as the strong help the weak, and the rich help the poor. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Charity is not permissible to be given to a rich person, or for one who is strong and healthy.”⁽³⁾ Giving to *Zakat* is one of the earliest moral commandments to be introduced and detailed in Islam even before the Prophet’s (PBUH) emigration to Medina. Allah says: “Give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully” (Holy Qur’an, 17:26);

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari (3335) and Muslim (1677).

(2) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari by Al-Bukhari on prayers (481) and Muslim on kinship relations (2585).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (6530), Abu Dawud on *Zakat* (1634), Al-Tirmidhi on *Zakat* as well (652), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Abu Dāwūd* (1444).

and “They ask you, [Oh Mohammed], what they should spend. Say, ‘Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:215). Muslims are required to have mercy on all others, even if they are not Muslims, in order to be worthy of Allah’s mercy. Giving, co-operation, and mercy are some of the general moral guidelines that establish Islamic life. In the sections below, I discuss some of the specific moral values that govern human interactions in Islam.

Modesty

Modesty in Islam is defined as being repulsed by immoral acts, and it is manifested in intrinsically rejecting anything that is undesirable from a religious or cultural perspective. Islamic historian Ibn Miskawayh (d. 421 A.H.) writes: “The first sign of sharp intellect in children is modesty. It reflects their ability to discern what is good and what is not. Children with a good sense of modesty are fully aware of acceptable behavior. They avoid unacceptable behaviors and fear to be seen acting in an unacceptable way. If you see a child staring down modestly and avoiding eye contact, you know this is an intelligent child.”⁽¹⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) calls on people to act modestly in many hadiths:

- *“Faith consists of 60 (or 70) branches. The best of them is to profess that ‘There is no Allah but Allah’. The lowest of them is to remove harmful things from the road. Modesty is also a branch of faith.”*
- *“Modesty is part of faith, and it brings nothing but good.”⁽²⁾*
- *“Every religion has its distinctive characteristic, and modesty is the distinctive characteristic of Islam.”⁽³⁾*
- *“One of the sayings of the earlier prophets is: ‘If you have no sense of modesty, do whatever you like.’”⁽⁴⁾*

Modesty, for men and women alike, is a highly appreciated moral value in Islam. Abu Said Al-Kudri describes the Prophet (PBUH) as a modest man who “was more

(1) See *Tahdhīb Al-Akhhlāq* by Ibn Miskawayh, 48.

(2) Narrated via Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari on faith (24) and Muslim (59).

(3) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Ibn Majah on asceticism (4181), Abu Ya`la (3573), Al-Tabarai in *Al-Awsaṭ* (1758), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (940).

(4) Narrated via Abu Masoud Al-Ansari by Al-Bukhari on the sayings of the early prophets (3483), Ahmed (17090), Abu Dawud on manners (4797), and Ibn Majah on asceticism (4183).

modest than a virgin behind her veil.”⁽¹⁾ The Classical poet Abu Tammam writes:

*If you do not fear the consequences of what you do at night,
And if you have no sense of modesty, then do as you might.
Nothing good is left in this life, if the beacon of modesty goes dark.
Modest people live in joy, for a tree thrives as long as it has bark.*

Modesty should not be confused with weakness, cowardice, or timidity. A faithful person has the courage of a lion when it comes to defending what is true and right. Being modest does not in any way mean being passive when one's rights are violated. Also, modesty should not impede anyone from learning about sciences or religion or from the pursuit of the truth. Allah says: "Indeed, Allah does not shy away from presenting an example - that of a mosquito or what is smaller than it" (Holy Qur'an, 2:26); and "Oh you who have believed, do not enter the houses of the Prophet (PBUH) except when you are permitted for a meal, without awaiting its readiness. But when you are invited, then enter; and when you have eaten, disperse without seeking to remain for conversation. Indeed, that [behavior] was troubling the Prophet (PBUH), and he is too shy to [dismiss] you. But Allah is not shy of the truth" (Holy Qur'an, 33:53).

Humility

Humility is doing away with one's pride and arrogance, which are considered evil traits that lead to hell. Many of the Prophet's (PBUH) hadiths and the verses of the Holy Qur'an warn people against pride and arrogance, and urge people to be humble:

- *"Is there not in Hell a residence for the arrogant?" (Holy Qur'an, 39:60).*
- *"Thus Allah seals over the hearts of the arrogant and the tyrants" (Holy Qur'an, 40:35).*
- *"I will turn away from My signs those who are arrogant upon the earth without right" (Holy Qur'an, 7:146).*
- *"Do not walk upon the earth exultantly. Indeed, you will never tear the earth [apart], and you will never reach the mountains in height" (Holy Qur'an, 17:37).*
- *"Do not turn your cheek [in contempt] toward people and do not walk*

(1) Narrated via Abu Said Al-Kudri by Al-Bukhari (3483), Ahmed (17090), Abu Dawud on manners, and Ibn Majah on asceticism (4183).

through the earth exultantly. Indeed, Allah does not like the self-deluded and the boastful" (Holy Qur'an, 31:18).

The Prophet (PBUH) says:

- *"He who has in his heart the weight of a mustard seed of pride shall not enter Paradise."*⁽¹⁾
- *"Allah has revealed to me that you should humble yourselves to one another. One should not hold himself above another."*⁽²⁾
- *"It is enough for a Muslim to commit evil by despising his Muslim brother."*⁽³⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) was a role model of humbleness. He was a man with considerable social power, but he cleaned his shoes, mended his clothes, and milked his sheep himself. He helped his family and servants with their chores. When he met with his companions, nobody could tell which one the prophet was. It is narrated that a man came to see him and he was shaking before him. The Prophet (PBUH) told him kindly: "Let your heart be at ease. I am not a king, but a man whose mother ate dried meat."⁽⁴⁾

Honor

Honor is a moral value that complements humbleness. Honor adds to human dignity; which Allah has already conferred on humans, but not any other species: "We have certainly dignified the children of Adam" (Holy Qur'an, 17:70). Faith adds honor to human dignity: "To Allah belongs [all] honor, and to His Messenger, and to the believers" (Holy Qur'an, 63:8).

Honor here should not be confused with pride, or power either. Allah says: "Whoever desires honor [through power] - then to Allah belongs all honor" (Holy Qur'an, 35:10). The faithful combine both humbleness and honor, as they are "humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 5:54). The Holy Qur'an describes the Prophet's (PBUH) companions as "those with him [the Prophet] are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves" (Holy Qur'an, 48:29).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim on faith (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud on clothing (4091).

(2) Narrated via Iyad Ibn Hammar by Muslim on descriptions of paradise (2865), Abu Dawud on manners (4895), and Ibn Majah on asceticism (4179).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on kinship relations (2564), Ahmed (7727), and Abu Dawud on manners (4882).

(4) Narrated via Abu Masoud by Ibn Majah on food (3312), Al-Hakim on battles and biographies (3/47), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (2677).

Another concept that is sometimes confused with humbleness is humility, which is mentioned only once in the Holy Qur'an in describing how people should relate to their parents: "lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy" (Holy Qur'an, 17:24). All the negative forms of accepting humiliation are rejected in Islam. Allah says: "Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say: 'In what [condition] were you?' They will say: 'We were oppressed in the land'. The angels will say: 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate?'" For those, their refuge is Hell - and evil it is as a destination" (Holy Qur'an, 4:97). The next verses make exception for those who cannot resist oppression: "Except for the oppressed among men, women and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they directed to a way - For those, Allah may pardon them, and Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving" (Holy Qur'an, 4:98-99).

Optimism

Optimism is looking at the bright side of things, people, and life, and always hoping for the best. Pre-Islamic Arab culture had many practices that involved seeking omens. For example, whenever they had to make a major decision, they would hold a bird and make their decision depending on the direction the bird would fly. If it flew in the wrong direction, they would be pessimistic. The Prophet (PBUH) rejected all these practices as forms of associating with Allah. Whenever he saw people engaging in these practices, he would pray: "Oh Allah, there is no omen but Your omen, and no good but Your good. There is no god but You."⁽¹⁾ He also said: "Whoever changes his plans because of an omen, he has associated with Allah."⁽²⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) has also taught us to pray every day in the morning and the evening, "Oh Allah, I have woken up (or I am going to bed) in Your blessings. Fulfill Your blessings on me in this world and the afterlife."⁽³⁾ The Sunnah is, in fact, rich with prayers for all types of actions and occasions. When one is done eating, one should say, "Thank Allah",⁽⁴⁾ when drinking water, one should say, "Thank Allah who made this water fresh by His mercy",⁽⁵⁾ and when putting on a new item of clothing for the first time, one should say, "Thank Allah who has clothed me with this and provided for me through no might or power on my part."⁽⁶⁾

(1) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ibn Wahb (659).

(2) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (7059) and Al-Tabarani (13/22).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ibn Al-Sunni on the day and night action (55).

(4) Narrated via Abu Omamah by Al-Bukhari on food (5458).

(5) Narrated via Abu Jafar by Al-Tabarai on supplications (899), Abu Nuaym in *Al-Hilya* (8/137), Al-Bayhaqi (4479), and Al-Albani (weak; 4202).

(6) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Abu Dawud on clothing (4023), Abu Ya' la (1488), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2042).

Life is full of ups and downs, but Muslims are not allowed to give in to despair and pessimism. They should always have faith that relief will eventually come from Allah. Despair is a sign of disbelieving: “Do not despair of relief from Allah. Indeed, no one despairs of relief from Allah except the disbelieving people” (Holy Qur’an, 12:87); and “Who despairs of the mercy of his Lord except for those astray?” (Holy Qur’an, 15:56). Every challenge in this life is a test of faith and a form of education and purification. In fact, Muslims thank Allah for hardships and endure them patiently. The Prophet (PBUH) went through formidable hardships. When something pleasant happened, he would say, “Praise is to Allah by Whose grace good deeds are completed” and when a hardship happened to him, he would say, “Praise is to Allah in all circumstances.”⁽¹⁾

Chastity

Chastity is an instinctive tendency to avoid immoral acts, especially those related to eating and sexuality, which lead to most corruption. Virtue, for example, entails avoiding all forms from of ill-gained money, such as usury, gambling, unethical business interactions, and trading in illegal products. Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly but only [in lawful] business by mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves [or one another]. Indeed, Allah is to you ever Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:29); and “Oh you who have believed, fear Allah and give up what remains [due to you] of interest, if you should be believers. And if you do not, then be warned of a war [against you] from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you may have your principal - [thus] you do no wrong, nor are you wronged” (Holy Qur’an, 2:278-279). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Fire is more appropriate for a body that grew on ill-gotten money.”⁽²⁾ While all forms of ill-gotten money lead to dire consequences, unjustly taking money from orphans is the most despicable sin. Allah says: “Indeed, those who devour the property of orphans unjustly are only consuming fire into their bellies. And they will be burned in a Blaze” (Holy Qur’an, 4:10).

Chastity also involves refraining from all unlawful sexual acts, which range from lustful looks to committing adultery. Allah says: “Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and safeguard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what they do. And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and safeguard their private parts and not expose their adornment except that which appears thereof and to wrap [a portion of]

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Ibn Majah on manners (3803), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (6999), Al-Hakim on sup-
plications (1/499), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmiʿ* (corrected; 4640).

(2) Narrated via Jabir Ibn Abdullah by Ahmed (14441), Al-Tirmidhi in traveling (614), and Ibn Hibban on
prayers (1723).

their head covers over their chests and not expose their adornment except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their women, that which their right hands possess, or those male attendants having no physical desire, or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women. And let them not stamp their feet to make known what they conceal of their adornment. And turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, Oh believers, that you might succeed" (Holy Qur'an, 24:30-31).

It is important to note that chastity does not mean celibacy, which is a form of monasticism that Islam rejects. Islam prohibits unlawful sexual relations only and celebrates lawful ones. Celibacy, on the other hand, is a rejection of Allah's blessings. The faithful are those who "safeguard their private parts - Except from their wives or those their right hands possess, for indeed, they will not be blamed - But whoever seeks beyond that, then those are the transgressors" (Holy Qur'an, 23:5-7).

Islam considers unlawful sexual relations to be a grave sin. In fact, Islam forbids people from even approaching adultery by acting in ways that promote or encourage it. Allah says: "Do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse. Indeed, it is ever an immorality and is evil as a way" (Holy Qur'an, 17:32). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Do not give a second look. While you are not to blame for the first, you have no right to the second."⁽¹⁾ These teachings require people to stay away from all actions that might lead to immoral intimacy.

Cleanliness

Islam promotes cleanliness, both in body and soul: "Indeed, Allah loves those who are constantly repentant and loves those who purify themselves" (Holy Qur'an, 2:222). Repentance is a form of spiritual cleansing, whereas purification in this context refers to physical cleanliness. In fact, cleanliness plays a significant role in faith, because faith is cleansing oneself from evil and developing noble qualities. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Cleanliness is half of one's faith." Cleanliness involves regular personal hygiene as well as ritual cleansing, such as ablution before prayers and bathing after sexual intercourse or a menstrual period.

Islam helps Muslims develop well-established cleanliness habits by associating them with acts of worship. For example, one cannot pray unless they are physically clean. We also see almost all books on Islamic jurisprudence starting with a chapter on cleanliness. After all, one of the very first verses of the Holy Qur'an to

(1) Narrated via Ali Ibn Abi Talib by Ahmed (1373), Ibn Abi Shayba on good moral character (32083), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (1902).

be revealed is “And your clothing purify” (Holy Qur’an, 74:4). Islam has also introduced many personal hygiene practices, such as brushing one’s teeth, washing hands before and after meals, removing excess hair from the armpits and the groin, and trimming one’s nails, among others. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The Miswak (tooth-stick) cleanses and purifies the mouth and pleases Allah”⁽¹⁾, and “If you have hair, honor it.”⁽²⁾ Muslims are also encouraged to keep their houses, mosques, and even the streets clean, following the Prophet’s (PBUH) sayings: “Allah is indeed clean, and He loves cleanliness. Clean your courtyards, and do not imitate the Jews”⁽³⁾, and “Removing harm from the road is a form of charity.”⁽⁴⁾

In addition to cleanliness, Islam calls for adornment with fine clothes and perfumes, especially at the Hajj and on religious festivities. Allah says: “Oh children of Adam, take your adornment at every masjid” (Holy Qur’an, 7:31); and “Say, ‘Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?’ Say, ‘They are for those who believe during the worldly life [but] exclusively for them on the Day of Resurrection’” (Holy Qur’an, 7:32). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah is beautiful, and He loves beauty.”⁽⁵⁾

Moderation

Allah has intended for the Muslim community to be the middle-ground community: “Thus we have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you” (Holy Qur’an, 2:143). It is the middle-ground because each individual has a mandate to establish and maintain a balanced approach to all aspects of life. Muslims are encouraged to stay away from sinful acts and to enjoy the pleasures of life without excess, because excessive consumption of the permissible things can be harmful. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Eat, drink, and wear [fine] clothes, as long as that does not involve any extravagance or vanity.”⁽⁶⁾ One needs to be mindful when consuming the good things in life, even if it is the water used for ablution: “Do not waste [water] even if you are on the bank of a flowing river.”⁽⁷⁾ Allah calls on all people: “Oh children of

(1) Narrated via Aisha by Ahmed (24203), Al-Nassa’i (5), Ibn Hibban (1067), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (2517).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Abu Dawud (4163), Al-Tahhawi in *Mushkil al-Āthār* (8/434), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (8485), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (500).

(3) Narrated via Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas by Al-Tirmidhi on manners (weak; 2799), Al-Bazzar (114), and Al-Albani in *Takhrīj al-ḥalāl wal-ḥarām* (weak; 113).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on jihad and biographies (2891, 2989) and Muslim on *Zakat* (1009).

(5) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim on faith (91), Ahmed (3789), and Abu Dawud on clothing (4091).

(6) Narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (6695) and Al-Nassa’i on *Zakat* (2559).

(7) Narrated by Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (weak; 7065), Ibn Majah on purity (425), Huyay Ibn Abdullah (6596), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 3292).

Adam, take your adornment at every masjid, and eat and drink, but be not excessive. Indeed, He likes not those who commit excess" (Holy Qur'an, 7:31).

Islam condemns all forms of excess, even when it comes to acts of worship, because it always comes at the expense of something else. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Your body has its rights, your wife has her rights, and your guest has his rights. Give each their rights."⁽¹⁾ While other religions promote excess in monasticism and asceticism, as it is the case with Buddhism, Manawism, and Christianity, Islam emphasizes that Allah has created pleasure to be enjoyed and forbidding the pleasures amounts to ingratitude. Allah says:

- *"Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of Allah which He has produced for His servants and the good [lawful] things of provision?'" (Holy Qur'an, 7:32).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors. And eat of what Allah has provided for you [which is] lawful and good. And fear Allah, in whom you are believers" (Holy Qur'an, 5:87-88).*
- *"[They are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate" (Holy Qur'an, 25:67).*
- *"Do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent" (Holy Qur'an, 17:29).*
- *"Be moderate in your pace and lower your voice; indeed, the most disagreeable of sounds is the voice of donkeys" (Holy Qur'an, 31:19).*

Moderation is the very nature of Islam, and Muslims are required to be moderate even in their emotions, so that feelings do not take over and lead them to error. Allah says:

- *"In order that you not despair over what has eluded you and not exult [in pride] over what He has given you" (Holy Qur'an, 57:23).*
- *"When you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative" (Holy Qur'an, 6:152).*
- *"Do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just" (Holy Qur'an, 5:8).*
- *"Perhaps Allah will put, between you and those to whom you have been enemies among them, affection. And Allah is competent, and Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 60:7).*

(1) Narrated via Amr Ibn Al-As by Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1159), both on fasting.

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Love moderately, for you may hate those you love one day. And hate moderately, for you may love those you hate one day.”⁽¹⁾ The straight path is the balance: “The heaven He raised and imposed the balance; that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance” (Holy Qur’an, 55: 9).

Contentment

Contentment is to be satisfied with what Allah has allotted to us in this world, because He is the one who provides us with talents, wealth, health, and everything we have. This moral value protects against greed, which makes some jealous of others, even if they were themselves the richest people on earth. Jealousy sets their hearts on fire, and no matter what they get their hands on, they are never satisfied. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Richness does not lie in the abundance of worldly goods, but richness is the richness of the heart.”⁽²⁾

Satisfaction is never about quantity, but it is about quality. If one has all the riches in the world, it will never be enough without contentment, which is the true treasure. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Be satisfied with what Allah has allotted for you and you shall be the richest person.”⁽³⁾ It is definitely not easy to be satisfied with what we already have. It takes effort and thinking to realize the true value of what we already have, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: “Whoever begins the day feeling secure with his family and healthy with enough provisions for the day is as though he owns the whole world.”⁽⁴⁾ We also learn to appreciate what we have and develop a sense of contentment by following the Prophet’s advice: “Look to those below you, and do not look to those above you. If you look to those above you, you may belittle Allah’s favors upon you.”⁽⁵⁾

Struggling With Desire

Struggling with oneself is at the core of all moral actions. Allah has created human nature which is just as capable of doing evil as it is of doing good. It is always easier to slip to the evil side than to elevate oneself to purity. Thus one has to constantly work hard to resist the temptation and to train oneself to stay on the straight and

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1997), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (3395), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmiʿ* (corrected; 178).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on the tenderness of the heart (6446) and Muslim on *Zakat* (1051).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8095) and Ibn Majah on asceticism (2305).

(4) Narrated via Ubaydullah Ibn Muhsin Al-Ansari by Al-Tirmidhi on asceticism (2346), Ibn Majah also on asceticism (4141), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (2318).

(5) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on (6490) and Muslim (2963).

narrow. Allah says: “And [by] the soul and He who proportioned it - And inspired it [with discernment of] its wickedness and its righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it. And he has failed who instills it [with corruption]” (Holy Qur’an, 91:7-10).

The hardest obstacles on one’s journey to self-purification is the inner self with its desires and tendency to give in to temptation. This is why the Holy Qur’an often warns us to be alert to our desires and tendencies. Allah says:

- *“Oh David, indeed We have made you a successor upon the earth, so judge between people in truth and do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 38:26).*
- *“Who is more astray than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah?” (Holy Qur’an, 28:50).*
- *“Have you seen he who has taken as his Allah his [own] desire, and Allah has sent him astray due to knowledge and has set a seal upon his hearing and his heart and put over his vision a veil? So who will guide him after Allah?” (Holy Qur’an, 45:23).*
- *“If We had willed, we could have elevated him thereby, but he adhered [instead] to the earth and followed his own desire. His example is like that of the dog: if you chase him, he pants, or if you leave him, he [still] pants” (Holy Qur’an, 7:176).*

To succeed in the struggle against temptation and desire, one has to be vigilant, but patient with oneself. One needs constantly to be reminded of the rewards awaiting those who succeed: “He who fears the position of his Lord and prevents the soul from [unlawful] inclination - Then indeed, Paradise will be [his] refuge” (Holy Qur’an, 79:40-41). This inner struggle is in fact more difficult than fighting enemies. This is why it is often described in the tradition as the “greater jihad”. However, it is the only way for salvation: “Those who strive for Us - We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 29:69).

Self-Preservation

An individual, in Islam, does not have ownership of him/herself. Rather, one’s body and soul belong to Allah and people are only entrusted with them. In other words, one does not have the right to disobey Allah in their bodies or souls, say by hurting themselves on purpose or by being lazy or negligent. Thus, suicide is one of the gravest sins in Islam: “Do not kill yourselves. Indeed, Allah is to you ever

Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:29). The Prophet (PBUH) says in this regard: “He who kills himself will be the eternal denizen of the Fire of Hell.”⁽¹⁾

Life is a responsibility to be taken seriously and a blessing to be cherished. Allah says: “Do not throw yourselves with your own hands into destruction” (Holy Qur’an, 2:195). This is why any habit that hurts the individual’s mind or body is categorically forbidden. Alcohol for example is forbidden, not just consuming it, but making, serving, or selling it, or facilitating its consumption in any way.⁽²⁾

By now we see a clear pattern of how and why Islam forbids certain acts. They are harmful acts with dire consequences, both to the individual and society. Whenever such acts are forbidden, they are categorically forbidden, as in the case of alcohol, regardless of how much one drinks. Allowing drinking alcohol moderately or in small amounts might lead some people to consume larger amounts or become alcoholics. The prohibition is firm in that it avoids opening Pandora’s box. Then, such prohibition is generalized to apply to similar acts. For example, just as wine is forbidden, any substance that leads to intoxication if consumed excessively is also forbidden. These generalizations lead to establishing jurisprudence principles, such as “no harm”, which disallows actions that may harm the individual, or others, physically or emotionally.

Independent Thought

It is not acceptable in Islam for an individual to jump on the bandwagon and follow the crowds in their thinking. Every individual is responsible for forming their own beliefs, and they have to make sure their beliefs are based on solid ground. The Holy Qur’an often warns us against making decisions based on conjecture, assumptions, traditions, or emotions. Allah says:

- *“Oh you who have believed, if there comes to you a disobedient person with information, investigate, lest you harm people out of ignorance and become regretful over what you have done” (Holy Qur’an, 49:6).*
- *“Oh you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate” (Holy Qur’an, 4:94).*
- *“Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - [one] will be questioned about all those” (Holy Qur’an, 17:36).*

(1) Narrated via Thabit Al-Dahhak by Al-Bukhari on funerals (1363) and Muslim on faith (110).

(2) See hadith narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Tirmidhi on business interactions (1295), Ibn Majah on drinks (3381), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (2/92), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib* (23570): “Allah has cursed wine, its drinker, its server, its seller, its buyer, its presser, the one for whom it is pressed, the one who conveys it, and the one to whom it is conveyed.”

- *"Most of them follow assumptions. Indeed, assumptions avail not against the truth at all" (Holy Qur'an, 10:36).*
- *"They follow assumptions and what [their] souls desire" (Holy Qur'an, 53:23).*

In these verses, we are reminded that Allah has given us the tools to pursue knowledge and that it is our responsibility to put these tools to good use. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an reminds us that acting based on tribal affiliations and collective thinking is a sign of disbelief, because disbelievers choose to believe what agrees with their desires rather than the truth, which they might not like. There are many examples in the Holy Qur'an of people who went astray because they insisted on following the traditions of their forefathers and their leaders:

- *"When they are told: 'Follow what Allah has revealed', they say: 'Rather, we will follow what we found our fathers do', even though their fathers understood nothing, and they were not guided?" (Holy Qur'an, 2:170).*
- *"They will say: 'Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way'" (Holy Qur'an, 33:67).*

The Prophet (PBUH) teaches us not to follow crowds in their actions and thinking: "Do not let yourselves be 'yes-men', saying: 'If the people are good then we will be good, and if they are wrong then we will be wrong'. Rather, decide for yourselves. If the people are good then you are good, and if they are evil, then do not behave unjustly."⁽¹⁾

Wise Use Of Time

Time is a blessing that Allah has created for the use of mankind. Allah says: "He has subjected for you the night and day" (Holy Qur'an, 16:12); and "It is He who has made the night and the day in succession for whoever desires to remember or desires to be grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 25:62). The Holy Qur'an draws our attention to the value of time by including several divine oaths that use time periods, such as: "By the night when it covers - And [by] the day when it appears" (Holy Qur'an, 92:1); "By the dawn" (Holy Qur'an, 89:1); "By the morning brightness" (Holy Qur'an, 93:1); and "By time" (Holy Qur'an, 103:1). In other contexts, the Holy Qur'an demonstrates the value of time by showcasing people who face death and wish they had used their time better. Allah says: "Spend [in the way of Allah] from what We have provided you before death approaches one of you, and he says, 'My Lord, if only You would delay me for a brief term so I would give to charity

(1) Narrated via Hudhayfah Ibn Al-Yaman by Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (2007), Al-Bazzar (2802), and Al-Albani in *Da'if Al-Jāmi'* (weak; 6271).

and be among the righteous'. But never will Allah delay a soul when its time has come. And Allah is Acquainted with what you do" (Holy Qur'an, 63:10-11); and "They will cry out therein, 'Our Lord, remove us; we will do righteousness - other than what we were doing!' But did We not grant you life enough for whoever would remember therein to remember, and the warner had come to you? So taste [the punishment], for there is not for the wrongdoers any helper" (Holy Qur'an, 35:37).

The Prophet (PBUH) reminds us of the value of time because we will be held accountable for how we spent it before Allah. He says: "One's feet will not move on the Day of Resurrection before he is asked about his life, how spent it; his youth, how he wore it out; his wealth, how he earned it and how he spent it; and his knowledge, how he used it."⁽¹⁾ He also gives us an important piece of advice: "Take full advantage of five before five: your youth before your old age, your health before your sickness, your wealth before your poverty, your life before your death, and your free time before your busy time."⁽²⁾

While some traditions view time as gold, Islam sees time as life, as Hassan Al-Banna famously said: "Our life is nothing but the time we spend between our birth and our death." Imam Al-Hassan Al-Basri writes: "You are nothing but a limited number of days. With every day that passes, part of you is gone."⁽³⁾ There is also the traditional saying: "Every day, as dawn breaks, dawn calls on people: 'Oh children of Adam, I am a new creation and a witness to what you do. Take what you can from me, because once I am gone, I will never be back'." Thus, Muslims should use their time wisely, and focus on acts of worship that are performed at special times, such as dawn, Friday, and Ramadan, as rewards from these times are multiplied more than any other time.

4.2.2. The Ethics Of Human Interaction With Other Creatures (Animals, Plants, Objects And Inanimate Beings)

Mankind has been endowed with intellect, which distinguishes it from all other species on earth. Allah has also made mankind the master of this earth, with power over all creatures. It is sufficient to watch a little child leading a camel or a water buffalo to see how much power humans have. Allah says: "Do they not see that We have created for them from what Our hands have made, grazing livestock, and [then] they are their owners? And We have tamed them for them, so some of

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Tirmidhi on Judgment Day (2416), Al-Bazzar (1435), Abu Ya`la (5271), and Al-Albani in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (128).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Nassa'i in *Al-Kubrā fi Al-Mawā'idh* (11832), Al-Hakim in *Al-Riqāq* (4/306), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi'* (corrected; 1077).

(3) Narrated by Abu Nuaym in *Hilyat Al-Awliyā'* (2/148).

them they ride, and some of them they eat. And for them therein are [other] benefits and drinks, so will they not be grateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 36:71-73).

Those animals that have been tamed and domesticated make life easy for us, as they help with farming and transportation. They are also a rich and varied source of food and many useful products: "The grazing livestock He has created for you; in them is warmth and [numerous] benefits, and from them you eat. And for you in them is [the enjoyment of] beauty when you bring them in [for the evening] and when you send them out [to pasture]. And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful. And [He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which you do not know" (Holy Qur'an, 16:5-8).

Even animals that have not been domesticated can be useful, for all sea creatures are lawful for Muslims to eat: "Lawful to you is game from the sea and its food as provision for you and the travelers, but forbidden to you is [hunting] game from the land as long as you are in the state of ihram" (Holy Qur'an, 5:96). Wild land animals are also lawful to eat with the exceptions specified in the Holy Qur'an: "Say, 'I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it, unless it be [an already] dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than Allah'" (Holy Qur'an, 6:145). Some wild animals are carnivores, and the Holy Qur'an does not explicitly forbid eating them, hence the opinions of Ibn Abbas and Imam Malik Ibn Anas who argue that eating carnivores is discouraged but not forbidden.

Mercy is the defining characteristic of Islamic ethics toward animals. It is one of Allah's divine attributes and the cornerstone of Islam: "We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 21:107). Thus, Muslims are required to act mercifully toward animals.

About 30 years ago, I published *Madkhal li-Dirāsāt Al-Sharī'a Al-Islāmiya* (*Introduction to Islamic Jurisprudence*), which includes a chapter on ethics toward animals in Islamic Shari'a using the Holy Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the cannons of Islamic literature on the topic as the main resources. In this chapter, I write: "Moral behavior toward animals is a practical application for moral values, both in their own right and in accordance to the Shari'a. Animals are particularly vulnerable, because mistreating them does not have immediate or direct consequences that could deter people from abusing them. For example, abusing animals will not cause them to mobilize, revolt, go on strike, or complain to authorities. Kindness toward animals is a purely moral act motivated by our desire to serve Allah."

The Sunnah is quite rich with teachings about animals, such as the following:

- *"A man once felt extremely thirsty while on a journey. He found a well, and he went down to get a drink of water. As he was leaving, he saw a dog panting out of thirst. The dog's tongue was lolling out, and it was eating moist earth out of thirst. The man thought to himself: 'This dog is as thirsty as I was'. He went back down the well, filled up his leather sock with water, and held it with his teeth as he climbed up. Then, he gave the water to the dog. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins. The Prophet's (PBUH) companions asked: 'Are we rewarded for showing kindness to the animals too?' He said: 'Every kind act toward a living creature is rewarded'."*⁽¹⁾
- *"Muawiya Ibn Qurrah narrates via his father that a man said to the Prophet (PBUH): 'Oh Messenger of Allah, I was going to slaughter a sheep and then I felt sorry for it'. The Prophet (PBUH) responded: 'Since you showed mercy to the sheep, Allah will show mercy to you'."*⁽²⁾
- *Ibn Abbas Narrates: "A man tied his sheep down to slaughter it and then started sharpening his knife. The Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Do you want your sheep to die twice? Sharpen your knife before you tie it down'."*⁽³⁾
- *Al-Sharid narrated that he heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: "Whoever kills a small bird for pleasure, it will beseech Allah on the Day of Resurrection saying: 'Oh Lord, so-and-so killed me for no good reason'."*⁽⁴⁾
- *Abdullah Ibn Amr narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Whoever kills a small bird or another creature unjustly will be asked about it before Allah." Someone asked: "What would be a just killing?" He responded: "You kill it to eat it and not throw it away."*⁽⁵⁾
- *Ibn Omar narrates that he once happened to pass by some young men from Quraish target practicing. They had a bird tied as a target, and took turns aiming their arrows at the bird. Whoever missed lost his arrow to the owner of the bird. When they saw Ibn Omar, they ran away. He said: "Who did this? Allah has cursed those who do this. Allah's Messenger cursed whoever uses a live creature as target practice."*⁽⁶⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (6009) and Muslim on peace (2244).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (15592), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (373), and Al-Bazzar (3319).

(3) Narrated by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Kabīr* (11/332) and *Al-Awsaṭ* (3590), Al-Hakim on sacrifices (4/231), Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (6033), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (1090).

(4) Narrated by Ahmed (weak; 19470), Al-Nassa'i on sacrifices (4446), Ibn Hibban on slaughtering animals (5894), and Al-Albani in *Bulūgh Al-Marām* (weak; 46).

(5) Narrated by Ahmed (weak; 6550 – references validated by Ahmed Shakir in his critical edition of *Al-Musnad*), Al-Nassa'i on hunting and slaughtering animals (4349), Al-Hakim (4/233), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (1092).

(6) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (5515) and Muslim (1958), both in hunting and slaughtering animals.

- *Ibn Masoud narrates: "We were with the Messenger of Allah one day on a journey, when he went to relieve himself. Meanwhile, we saw a bird with two young chicks, and we took the chicks. The bird came and spread out its wings beating the ground in anguish. The Prophet (PBUH) came back and saw the bird. He said: 'Who has caused this bird such pain over her chicks? Give them back to her'. He later saw an ant-hill that we had burned. He asked: 'Who has burned this?' We replied that we had. He said: 'Only Allah Who created fire punishes with fire'."*⁽¹⁾
- *Abdullah Ibn Jafar narrates: "I once rode with the Prophet (PBUH) when he discretely asked to be excused. We stopped at a place dear to him near a grove of palm trees. He entered the orchard of a man from the Ansar. All of a sudden, a camel showed up and kept making sounds of pain as its eyes flowed with tears. The Prophet (PBUH) went to the camel and patted its head until it calmed down. He then asked 'Whose camel is this?' A young man from the Ansar came and said it was his. The Prophet (PBUH) said: 'Will you fear Allah in this beast which He has given to you? It complained to me that you keep it hungry and overburden it'."*⁽²⁾
- *Ibn Omar narrates that the Prophet said: "A woman went to hell for a cat she tied; she did not feed it or let it feed itself."*⁽³⁾
- *Sahl Ibn Al-Hudhalifa narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) saw a camel that was too skinny and said: "Fear Allah when you treat animals. Ride them appropriately and eat them appropriately."*⁽⁴⁾
- *Asmaa Bint Abu Bakr narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) prayed during the solar eclipse one day, and said: "Hell has drawn very close to me. I panicked and cried: 'Oh Allah, am I with them?' but then I saw a woman in hell being scratched up by a cat. I asked about her and I was told she starved that cat to death."*⁽⁵⁾
- *Jabir narrates: "The Prophet (PBUH) has forbidden hitting people across the face and branding faces [including animals' faces]."*⁽⁶⁾
- *Jabir also narrates: "The Prophet (PBUH) once saw a donkey whose face was branded. He said: 'May Allah curse whoever branded it'."*⁽⁷⁾

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud on jihad (2675), Al-Nawawi in *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn* (references corrected; 1610), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (487).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (1745) and Abu Dawud on jihad (2549).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (2365) and Muslim (2242).

(4) Narrated by Abu Dawud on jihad (2548), Ibn Khuzayma on rituals (2545), Al-Nawawi in *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn* (references corrected; 966), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (23).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on the call for prayers (745) and Ahmed (26963).

(6) Narrated by Muslim on clothing and adornments (2116) and Ahmed (14424).

(7) Narrated by Muslim on clothing and adornments (2117).

Practical Applications Of The Prophet's Directives

The early caliphs and provincial governors followed the Prophet's (PBUH) teachings and exercised their power to ban cruelty against animals. For example:

- *Omar Ibn Al-Khattab once saw a donkey overloaded with bricks. He took a couple of bricks off the donkey's back. The donkey's owner came to Omar and asked: "Oh Omar, What is your business with my donkey? Do you have authority over what I do with it?" He said: "Why else am I here?" Avicenna has an interesting comment on Omar's statement. He writes: "This is exactly what the Prophet (PBUH) meant when he said: "You are all guardians and are responsible for your subjects."⁽¹⁾*
- *Omar also said: "If a lost camel died on the banks of the Euphrates, I would be afraid Allah would hold me responsible for it."⁽²⁾*
- *Abdul Raziq narrates that Ibn Sirin once said: "Omar saw a man dragging a sheep by the leg to slaughter it. He told him: 'Shame on you! If you have to take it to its death, do it kindly.' "⁽³⁾*
- *Ibn Saad narrates in his anthology of biographies that Al-Musayyib Ibn Darim said: "I saw Omar Ibn Al-Khattab order the punishment of a man for abusing a camel. As the man was being punished, Omar asked him: 'Why did you overburden your camel?' "⁽⁴⁾*
- *Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz wrote to the official in charge of trading routes ordering him to ban the use of heavy bridles and beating animals with sticks that have metal ends. He also wrote to Hayyan, then governor of Egypt: "It has reached my attention that people in Egypt use camels to carry heavy loads of 1,000 pounds. Once you receive this message, I do not want to hear of a camel that was made to carry more than 600 pounds."⁽⁵⁾*

The moral principles laid out in the Holy Qur'an, as well as the teachings of the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions, offer a rich resource for jurists to further develop detailed explanations of moral behavior toward animals. As a result, we find an extensive body of literature on the moral behavior toward pets and wild animals alike. These early Islamic works, which were unprecedented at the time,

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari on lending money (2409) and Muslim on leadership (1829).

(2) See *Al-Tarâtib Al-Idâriya* (1/268) and *Al-Bayân wal-Taḥṣîl* by Ibn Rushd (Avicenna), eds. By Mohammed Hijji et al., Beirut: Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, 2nd edition, 1988.

(3) Narrated by Abdul Raziq on rituals (discontinuous references; 8605).

(4) See *Al-Ṭabqât Al-Kubrâ* by Ibn Saad (7/91).

(5) See *Sīrat 'Omar Ibn 'Abd Al-'Azīz* by Ibn Abdal Hakam (141), and *Al-Tarâtib Al-Idâriya* (2/152).

were motivated by the moral obligation to protect animals against cruelty, rather than social interests as in the case of modern laws. For example, these works discuss the conditions for beating animals of burden. These animals can be beaten to run faster within reason, but not if they trip and fall, because they cannot help it.

Another example is *Maṭālib Ulī Al-Nuhā fī Sharḥ Ghāyat Al-Muntahā* by Al-Ruhaybani (d. 1212 A.H.), which is one of the cannons of Hanbali jurisprudence. This book includes several chapters on treating animals. Al-Ruhaybani writes: “The owner of an animal is required to feed it, even if it is fatally ill or it is of no use anymore. He is also required to give it appropriate amounts of water that quench its thirst without over-watering it. This is in accordance with the Prophet’s (PBUH) hadith: “A woman went to hell for a cat she tied; she did not feed it or let it feed itself.”⁽¹⁾ If the owner of an animal cannot afford to feed it, he has to sell it or rent it out. If that is not possible, he has to slaughter it and use it for food rather than letting it starve to death. If the owner does not do any of these, a judge has to enforce one of the available options.

Animals are not to be verbally abused either. Omran Ibn Hussayn narrates that Prophet (PBUH) was once traveling with a caravan when a woman cursed a camel. He ordered: “Take everything off this camel and let it go free, for it has been cursed.”⁽²⁾ Omran comments: “I can still remember seeing that camel walking around freely and nobody bothering it.” Muslim also narrated via Abu Al-Darda’ that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Those who curse cannot intercede or testify on the Day of Judgment.”⁽³⁾

Animals are not to be overburdened with heavy loads because this is torture to them. A dairy animal has the right to provide enough milk for its own calves because this milk is created for the calves. Whoever milks an animal should follow the Sunnah by trimming his nails so as not to hurt the animal’s udder. Furthermore, animals shall not be beaten or branded on the face, because the Prophet (PBUH) has banned both, but it is permissible to trim long hair, such as a horse’s mane or tail. It is also permissible to put a bell on the animal so that people know where it is. Animals shall not be overfed or force-fed, which some people do to fatten animals. If a person owns a dog for permissible purposes, he is obligated to provide it with sufficient water and food. Otherwise, the dog has to be let free to find its own food. No animal shall be starved to death, even if it is one of the animals that people can kill in the Haram of Mecca (rats, snakes, scorpions, rabid dogs, and gledes). This is in accordance with the Prophet’s (PBUH) hadith: “When

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (2365) and Muslim (2242).

(2) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2595) and Ahmed (19870).

(3) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2598) and Abu Dawud on manners (4907).

you kill, you must make the killing in the best manner; when you slaughter, make your slaughter in the best manner”⁽¹⁾

Abu Ali Ibn Rahhal discusses the controversy over keeping pet birds in cages in his book *Al-Tarātīb Al-Idāriya (Administrative Rules)*. He writes: “Keeping birds in cages is forbidden if they are treated cruelly, say by not giving them enough food or water (on purpose or by mistake) or by keeping them with other birds that might hurt them, as in the case of roosters. All cruelty toward animals is forbidden. If someone wants to keep a bird in a cage, it has to be done kindly and responsibly. One has to check on the bird in the same way one would check on one’s own children. One has to make sure birds have enough food and water and that they cannot hurt each other, by separating them if necessary. Birds should have a piece of wood to stand on to avoid direct contact with the ground, especially on cold nights, which can hurt them. Again, all forms of cruelty toward animals are categorically forbidden. People are forbidden from locking or tying animals away from their food and water for a long time, and from overburdening them. People are allowed to keep animals and birds as long as they do not hurt them. If they do, Allah will punish them in this world and in the afterlife, as the Prophet (PBUH) said: “Allah has mercy on those who have mercy.”⁽²⁾

Islamic Jurisprudence On Cruelty Toward Animals

Individuals are responsible for the way they treat animals, and this responsibility is upheld by the state and the law. We have seen in the histories of the early Muslim states how rulers enforced the laws that protect animal rights. For example, Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and Omar Ibn Abdul Aziz punished people for cruelty against animals. In fact, all Muslims are required to protect animals against cruelty by admonishing those who act cruelly and by reporting it to the authorities. We see many such examples in literature on early Islamic governance systems. For instance, Al-Mawardi (d. 974 A.H., 1058 A.D.) writes in his *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭāniya (The Sultan’s Rules)*: “If an individual abuses his own cattle by overworking or overburdening them, the governor shall forbid him from acting as such.”⁽³⁾

Abu Ali Ibn Rahhal writes an interesting critique of Avicenna’s comments on animal rights. For example, Avicenna claims that: “The owner of a slave is legally required to provide food, shelter, and clothing for the slave. This legal requirement does not apply in the case of animals because providing for animals is a

(1) *Sunan an-Nassa’i* (4411) and see *Maṭālib Ulī Al-Nuhā fī Sharḥ Ghāyat Al-Muntahā* by Al-Ruhaybani, 2/262-294.

(2) Narrated via Osama Ibn Zaid by Al-Bukhari on monotheism (7448) and Muslim on funerals (923) and see *Al-Tarātīb Al-Idāriya (Administrative Rules)*, 2/151-152.

(3) See *Al-Aḥkām Al-Sulṭāniya (The Sultan’s Rules)*, 272.

moral rather than a legal requirement. Therefore, the owner of an animal can only be rebuked for mistreating an animal.”⁽¹⁾ Ibn Rahal responds: “According to the Prophet’s (PBUH) Sunnah, showing kindness to animals is mandatory and all cruelty to animals is a sin. For example, animals are not to be overburdened, beaten on the face, used as chairs, or tied without easy access to food and water. Moreover, animals should not be used at night unless they are left to rest during the day. Avicenna claims that these are not legal obligations but moral ones, concluding that someone who abuses an animal can only be admonished. This claim is in clear violation of the Sunnah and all the related hadiths. Furthermore, Abu Omar has established that all abuse is a sin, and all sins have to be changed. If admonishing people for committing sinful acts was enough of a deterrent, there would be no need for a penal code.”⁽²⁾

Islam motivated these debates on animal rights centuries before the concept developed in the West because animal rights are part of Islamic ethics. Immanuel Kant proposed that humans have no obligations toward animals; therefore, animals have no rights because rights are derived from obligations. Even if we agree with Kant’s premise on the relationship between rights and obligations, animals still have rights. These rights are derived from the obligation that comes from their being subservient to mankind: “Do they not see that We have created for them from what Our hands have made, grazing livestock, and [then] they are their owners? And We have tamed them for them, so some of them they ride, and some of them they eat. And for them therein are [other] benefits and drinks, so will they not be grateful?” (Holy Qur’an, 36:71-73). Humans are required to express their gratitude for having power over animals, and this gratitude translates into kindness and protection from abuse and cruelty.

Human Ethics Toward Plants

In this section, we turn our discussion to Islamic ethics toward another life form, plants. The Holy Qur’an mentions plants in many contexts. Allah says:

- *“Have you seen what you sow? Do you make it grow or is it We who make it grow? Had We wanted, We could have crushed it to bits and you would have been left to lament, crying, ‘We have been left to suffer loss’” (Holy Qur’an, 56:63-67).*
- *“Evidence [of the truth] for them is how We revived the dead earth, and produced therein grains from which they eat and established therein gardens of*

(1) See *Al-Bayān wal-Taḥṣīl* by Avicenna (Ibn Rushd), eds. By Mohammed Hijji et al., Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Gharb Al-Islami, 1988, 9/208.

(2) See *Al-Tarātīb Al-Idāriya* (Administrative Rules), 2/153-154.

palm trees and vineyards and have made springs gush with water therein, so that they may eat the fruits and whatever their hands prepare. Will they not then be grateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 36:33-35).

- *"In the earth there are adjacent pieces of land, vineyards, farms, date-palms of single and many roots which are all watered by the same liquid. We have made some yield a better food than others. All this is evidence (of the existence of Allah) for the people who understand."*
- *"It is Allah who sends down water from the sky for you to drink and produces plants as pasture for your cattle. He causes to grow for you thereby the crops, olives, palm trees, grapevines, and from all the fruits. Indeed, in that is a sign for a people who give thought" (Holy Qur'an, 16:1-11).*
- *"And the earth - We spread it out and cast therein firmly set mountains and made grow therein [something] of every beautiful kind, giving insight and a reminder for every servant who turns [to Allah]. And We have sent down blessed rain from the sky and made grow thereby gardens and grain from the harvest and tall palm trees with clusters of dates as sustenance for the servants, and We have given life thereby to a dead land. Thus is the resurrection" (Holy Qur'an, 50: 7-11).*
- *"It is He who sends down rain from the sky, and We produced thereby all things. We produced from it greenery from which We produce grains arranged in layers. And from the palm trees emerge fruit hanging low in clusters. [We produce] gardens of grapevines, olives, and pomegranates, similar yet varied. Look at [each of] its fruit when it yields and [at] its ripening. Indeed, these are signs for a people who believe" (Holy Qur'an, 6:99).*
- *"It is He who causes gardens to grow, [both] trellised and not, and palm trees and crops of different [kinds of] food and olives and pomegranates, similar and dissimilar. Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields and give its due [Zakat] on the day of its harvest. But do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not like those who commit excess" (Holy Qur'an, 6:141).*

These verses and many others demonstrate how the Holy Qur'an treats plants as one of Allah's greatest blessings to mankind and other species as well. People use plants for so many things in addition to eating them and appreciating their beauty. All those plants and the animals that eat them were created for the service of mankind. Allah says:

- *"Then let man look at his food. We send down water in abundance and let the earth break open and caused grain, grapes, vegetables, olives, palm trees, gardens of dense shrubbery, fruits, and grass to grow within for you and your grazing livestock to enjoy" (Holy Qur'an, 80:24-32).*

- *“Have they not seen that We drive the water [in clouds] to barren land and bring forth thereby crops from which their livestock eat and [they] themselves? Then do they not see?” (Holy Qur’an, 32:27).*
- *“Oh you who have believed, spend from the good things which you have earned and from that which We have produced for you from the earth” (Holy Qur’an, 2:267).*

These verses and the ones quoted earlier state the moral rights and obligations associated with plants. People have the right to eat and enjoy the plants that grow in their lands, and they are required to pay *Zakat* from their crops. The Prophet (PBUH) has specified the amount to be given to *Zakat* from crops: “A tenth of what the sky waters goes to *Zakat*.”⁽¹⁾ Moreover, growing crops requires co-operation and it involves a host of business transactions, all of which need to be in accordance with moral standards. In times of drought and famine, people need to follow the example set by Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) by planning ahead, conserving, and distributing grains fairly.

In many places, crops need to be irrigated, which requires people to manage water distribution fairly. Everything that involves crops also involves ethics. People do not need plants just for food, as there are numerous other uses for them. People need trees for shade and also for aesthetic purposes, especially in densely populated areas. In fact, people cannot live without plants, hence the need for a moral code that regulates how people benefit from them.

Islamic Teachings On Agricultural Activities

1. Muslim farmers should cooperate to regulate their water use. This co-operation will help them better identify water sources, manage irrigation projects, such as building dams and canals, and reduce water waste. Farming is a considerable undertaking, and co-operation helps achieve formidable tasks.
2. Muslim farmers should co-ordinate their agricultural activities in ways that allow them to diversify their crops. For example, they cannot all grow the same crop. Diversifying crops helps satisfy the different economic needs of the community.
3. Muslim farmers should also establish fairness in all their dealings. Islam does not allow the powerful to do injustice to the weak, say by engaging in unfair hiring practices or offering unfair wages. The Prophet (PBUH)

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari (1483).

says: “Give the laborer his wages before his sweat dries.”⁽¹⁾ They should also support each other, as the Prophet (PBUH) says that nobody should go to bed knowing that a neighbor is hungry.⁽²⁾ Allah says: “Give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully” (Holy Qur’an, 17:26).

4. Muslim farmers should protect public property. Nobody has the right to damage or cut down a tree or a plant, even if it does not belong to anyone. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Whoever [unjustly] cuts down a tree, Allah will punish him with fire.”⁽³⁾ Al-Albani argues that this hadith concerns only the trees that grow naturally in the Haram (The Grand Mosque at Mecca), but there is no evidence in support of this claim. Abu Dawud also comments on this hadith: “This version of the hadith is incomplete. The complete hadith is ‘Whoever unjustly cuts down a tree in the desert used by travelers and animals to rest in the shade, Allah will punish him with fire’.”⁽⁴⁾ The early Caliphs followed in the Prophet’s (PBUH) footsteps. For example, Abu Bakr gave his orders to Osama’s army on their way to battle: “Do not betray, mutilate, or kill children, women, or the elderly. Do not cut down or burn trees. Do not slaughter an animal unless for food.”⁽⁵⁾

4.2.3 The Ethics Of Human Interaction With Insentient Beings

In the previous sections, I have discussed Islamic ethics toward people, animals, and plants. In this section, I discuss Islamic ethics toward other creatures and beings. Islamic ethics is comprehensive in the sense that its principles apply to the entire universe, including all living beings and inanimate objects. The relationship between humans and the world around them are explained in various Qur’anic verses:

- “Allah has spread out the earth for you, so that you may walk along its wide roads” (Holy Qur’an, 71:19-20).
- “It is Allah Who made the earth a resting place for you” (Holy Qur’an, 2:22).
- “Have We not made the earth a resting place?” (Holy Qur’an, 78:6).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Ibn Majah on labor (2443), Al-Quda`i in *Musnad Al-Shihāb* (744), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (corrected; 1890).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (112), Abu Ya`la (2699), Al-Tabarani (12/154), Al-Hakim (4/167), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 149).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Habashi by Abu Dawud on manners (5239), Al-Nassa’i in *Al-Kubrā fī Al-Siyar* (8557), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 614).

(4) See *Sunan Abī Dāwūd* (5239).

(5) See *Al-Kāmil* by Ibn Kathir (2/196), ed. by Omar Abd Al-Salam Tadmuri. Beirut, Lebanon: Dar Al-Kitab Al-Arabi, 1997.

- *"It is He who has made the earth subservient to you. Walk through its vast valleys and eat from what He has provided for you. Before Him you will all be resurrected" (Holy Qur'an, 67:15).*
- *"He spread out the earth for people and with all kinds of fruits and palm-trees with sheathed blossoms" (Holy Qur'an, 55:10-11).*

We also see many references in the Holy Qur'an to water, the source of life, all of which originates from the earth:

- *"And after that He spread the earth. He extracted from it its water and its pasture. And He set the mountains firmly. All is provision for you and your cattle" (Holy Qur'an, 79:30-33).*
- *"Have you seen what you sow? Do you make it grow or is it We who make it grow?" (Holy Qur'an, 56:63-64).*
- *"Have you seen the water that you drink? Is it you who brought it down from the clouds, or is it We who bring it down? If We willed, We could make it salty. Why are you not grateful?" (Holy Qur'an, 56:68-70).*

The Qur'an also draws our attention to the skies above to tell us how insignificant our earth is compared to the whole universe, which modern astronomy is only beginning to understand. Allah says:

- *"We have certainly beautified the nearest heaven with stars" (Holy Qur'an, 67:5).*
- *"It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth, the like of them [in number]. His command descends among them so you may know that Allah is competent over all things and that Allah has encompassed all things in knowledge" (Holy Qur'an, 65:12).*

4.2.4 The Ethics Of Human Interaction With Unperceivable Sentient Beings (Angels And Jinns)

Islamic ethics extends to include moral guidelines that regulate behavior toward beings that we cannot perceive directly. We only know about them through faith, but we are required to believe in their existence as part of our creed. The jinn, for example, are beings that Allah has created to worship and obey Him. Some of them are faithful, while others are not, as explained in the Holy Qur'an:

- *"Say, [Oh Mohammed], 'It has been revealed to me that a group of jinn listened [to the Holy Qur'an] and said, 'Indeed, we have heard an amazing Holy Qur'an. It guides to the right course, and we have believed in it. And we will never*

associate anyone with our Lord ... Among us are Muslims [in submission to Allah], and among us are the unjust. And whoever has become Muslim - those have sought out the right course. But as for the unjust, they will be firewood for Hell' " (Holy Qur'an, 72:1-2, 14-15).

- *"They [the jinn] made for him [Solomon] what he willed of elevated chambers, statues, bowls like reservoirs, and stationary kettles. [We said], 'Work, Oh family of David, in gratitude.' And few of My servants are grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 34:13).*
- *"We subjected the wind to him [David] blowing at his command, gently, wherever he directed, and [also] every builder and diver of the unruly jinn - and others bound together in shackles. This is Our gift, so grant or withhold without account" (Holy Qur'an, 38:36-39).*

The Holy Qur'an tells us that the jinn were created before humans and that Satan was one of them. He disobeyed Allah when Adam was created: "We said to the angels, 'Prostrate to Adam', and they did, except for Satan. He was a jinn who departed from the command of his Lord" (Holy Qur'an, 18:50). Allah asked him: "What prevented you from prostrating to that which I created with My hands? Are you proud or are you among the exalted ones?" He said: "I am better than him. You created me from fire and created him from clay" (Holy Qur'an, 38:75-76). Satan decided to take on tempting Adam and his descendants to evil, and he asked Allah: "My Lord, then relieve me until the Day they are resurrected." [Allah] said: "Indeed, you are relieved until the Day of the time well-known." [Satan] said: "My Lord, because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them on earth, and I will mislead them all except, among them, Your chosen servants." [Allah] said: "The path [of return] to Me is straight. My servants - no authority will you have over them, except those deviators who follow you" (Holy Qur'an, 15:36-42). Thus began the battle between Satan and Adam's descendants. Allah has warned us against our enemy whose enmity predates us: "Satan is an enemy to you. Thus, take him as an enemy. He only invites his followers to be among the companions of the Blaze" (Holy Qur'an, 35:6).

Allah has also commanded us to believe that jinn exist, even though we do not see them. He even commands us to seek His refuge from them: "Say, 'I seek refuge in the Lord of mankind, The Sovereign of mankind - The Allah of mankind - From the evil of the retreating whisperer - Who whispers [evil] into the chests of mankind - From among the jinn and mankind'" (Holy Qur'an, 114:1-6), and "Say, 'My Lord, I seek refuge in You from the incitements of the devils, and I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they be present with me'" (Holy Qur'an, 23:97-98).

The Holy Qur'an does not offer any moral guidelines regarding the jinn because we do not interact with them directly. There are only a few such guidelines in the Sunnah. For example, Muslims are not allowed to remove feces using bones and dry camel dung, which used to be a common practice in pre-Islamic times, because the jinn eat bones and their animals eat dung. Ibn Masoud narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Someone from the jinn came to invite me, so I went to recite for them." Ibn Masoud said: "We went along and saw their tracks and the traces of their camp fire." Al-Shabi said: "They [the jinn] asked the Prophet (PBUH) about their provisions, and he said: 'Every bone upon which Allah's name has been mentioned, that falls into your hands, and every dropping of dung is fodder for your beasts'. The Prophet (PBUH) said to his companions: 'Do not use bones and dried dung to clean for they are provisions for your brothers'."⁽¹⁾

Angels are a different type of being that we also do not see, but we are required to believe that they exist. Unlike the jinn, they do not have free will. Rather, they are Allah's soldiers who do as commanded: "None knows the soldiers of your Lord except Him" (Holy Qur'an, 74:31). Angels are pure, and they have no instincts that can control them. Rather, they only obey Allah: "They [the angels] do not disobey Allah in what He commands them but do what they are commanded" (Holy Qur'an, 66:6) and "They exalt Him night and day without fail" (Holy Qur'an, 21:20).

Exalting Allah is the main function of the angels, but they do other things as commanded. For example, they protect people, record their deeds, take people in death, and receive those who are admitted into heaven or hell. Allah says:

- *"Indeed, guardians are [appointed] over you, noble and recording. They know whatever you do" (Holy Qur'an, 82:10-12).*
- *"Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private conversations? Yes, [We do], and Our messengers are with them recording" (Holy Qur'an, 43:80).*
- *"When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left. Not a word is uttered unless there is a watcher nearby [to record it]" (Holy Qur'an, 50:17-18).*
- *"And the record [of deeds] will be placed [open], and you will see the criminals fearful of what is in it, and they will say, 'Oh, woe to us! What is this book that leaves nothing small or great without listing it?' And they will find what they did present [before them]. And your Lord does injustice to no-one" (Holy*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim on prayers (450), Ahmed (4149), Abu Dawud on cleanliness (39), and Al-Tirmidhi on exegesis (3258).

Qur'an, 18:49).

- *"Say, 'The angel of death who has been entrusted with you will take you. Then to your Lord you will be returned'" (Holy Qur'an, 32:11).*
- *"Those who feared their Lord will be driven to Paradise in groups until, when they reach it while its gates have been opened and its keepers say, 'Peace be upon you; you have become pure. Enter it to abide eternally therein'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:73).*
- *"And they [the people in hell] will call, 'Oh Malik [the angel in charge of Hell], let your Lord put an end to us!' He will say, 'Indeed, you will remain'. We had certainly brought you the truth, but most of you, to the truth, were averse" (Holy Qur'an, 43:77-78).*

Our moral obligations toward the angels are to believe in them, just as we believe in the scriptures and the prophets. It is also our obligation not to worship them or to think they are divine. Allah says:

- *"The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], 'We make no distinction between any of His messengers'. And they say, 'We hear and we obey. [We seek] Your forgiveness, our Lord, and to You is the [final] destination'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:285).*
- *"Whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray" (Holy Qur'an, 4:136).*
- *"Nor could he order you to take the angels and prophets as lords. Would he order you to disbelief after you had become Muslims?" (Holy Qur'an, 3:80).*
- *"And they say, 'The Most Merciful has taken a son'. Exalted is He! Rather, they are [but] honored servants. They cannot precede Him in word, and they act by His command. He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them, and they cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves. And they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive. And whoever of them should say, 'Indeed, I am a Allah besides Him' - that one We would recompense with Hell. Thus do We recompense the wrongdoers" (Holy Qur'an, 21:26-29).*

In addition to believing in the angels, we should love them because they constantly ask Allah to forgive us and keep us away from the fire. Allah says:

- *"Those [angels] who carry the Throne and those around it exalt [Allah] with*

praise and believe in Him and ask forgiveness for those who have believed, [saying], ‘Our Lord, You have encompassed all things in mercy and knowledge; thus forgive those who have repented and followed Your way and protect them from the punishment of Hellfire’” (Holy Qur’an, 40:7).

- *“It is He who confers blessings upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darkness into the light” (Holy Qur’an, 33:43).*

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Every day, two angels descend, and one of them says, ‘Oh Allah! Compensate the person who gives [to charity]’; while the other one says, ‘Oh Allah! Destroy the one who withholds [charity]’.”⁽¹⁾

The faithful should also learn from the moral behavior of angels. For example, they never disobey Allah: “They cannot precede Him in word, and they act by His command” (Holy Qur’an, 21:27). We have also been ordered to do the same: “Oh you who have believed, do not put [yourselves] before Allah and His Messenger, but fear Allah. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Knowing” (Holy Qur’an, 49:1). We should also learn from the way they address Allah. For example, Allah says: “He taught Adam all the names. Then He showed them to the angels and said, ‘Inform Me of their names, if you are truthful’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:31). The angels not only apologized for not knowing, but they also said: “Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise” (Holy Qur’an, 2:32). We also see their manners when addressing Allah in the verse “Intercession does not benefit with Him except for one whom He permits. [And those wait] until, when terror is removed from their hearts, they will say [to one another], ‘What has your Lord said?’ They will say, ‘The truth’. And He is the Most High, the Grand” (Holy Qur’an, 34:32). This verse is explained in the hadith “When Allah decrees a matter in the Heavens, the angels beat their wings in submission to His saying, [sounding as if it is a chain being dragged] over a rock. When fear recedes from their hearts, they say [to each other]: ‘What has your Lord said?’ They reply: ‘The truth, and He is the Most High, the Great’” (34:23).⁽²⁾

Believing in angels has direct consequences on the behavior of the faithful and their relationship with Allah and the universe. These include:

1. Believing in angels strengthens one’s faith in Allah’s unlimited ability to create as He wills.
2. It encourages the faithful to obey Allah, following the example of the angels who compete to please Allah, even though they are infallible. Allah

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1442) and Muslim (1010).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4701).

says: “Those who are near your Lord [the angels] are not prevented by arrogance from His worship, and they exalt Him, and to Him they prostrate” (Holy Qur’an, 7:206).

3. Allah has entrusted the angels with protecting people, which is a great honor He has conferred upon mankind.
4. It reminds people of their weakness and Allah’s blessings. It is this weakness that makes protection by the angels even more important.
5. It helps the faithful deter themselves from pride, because no matter how hard one worships Allah, it will never be the same as how the angels worship Him. The angels “exalt Him night and day without fail” (Holy Qur’an, 21:20). Nevertheless, they ask Him for forgiveness. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “On the Day of Judgment, the angels beseech Allah: ‘Our Lord, forgive us, for we have not given You your due worship’.”⁽¹⁾
6. Believing in angels deepens one’s reverence for Allah. The faithful try even harder to stay away from wrongdoing because they firmly believe that the angels are recording everything they do. Allah says: “Indeed, guardians are [appointed] over you, noble and recording. They know whatever you do” (Holy Qur’an, 82:10-12). It is interesting to see how people tend to modify their behavior when they realize that there are security cameras recording what they do. Knowing that we are constantly being watched and that every move is recorded is a deterrent from wrongdoing. It also promotes self-awareness and self-accountability.
7. The faithful should follow the role model of the angels in the way they worship Allah. Jabir Ibn Samra narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) once asked people as they were getting ready to pray: “Would you line up the way the angels do?” Someone asked: “How do the angels line up when they pray?” He said: “They fill up the front lines and they stand shoulder to shoulder.”⁽²⁾ Thus, the Prophet encourages us to emulate the angels in the way they worship Allah.
8. Muslims have moral duties toward the angels. For example, Muslims should not do things that offend angels and drive them away from our homes and gatherings. They should also refrain from doing the things that make angels curse people. Allah says: “Those who disbelieve and die while they are disbelievers - upon them will be the curse of Allah and of the angels and the people” (Holy Qur’an, 2:161).

(1) Narrated via Salman Al-Farisi by Al-Hakim (corrected following Muslim and Al-Dhahabi; 4/586).

(2) Narrated by Muslim on prayers (430) and Ahmed (20964).

9. When we behave morally toward the angels, they pray for us and ask Allah to forgive us. Their prayers take us from the darkness of ignorance and disbelieve into the light of faith and knowledge. Allah says: "It is He who confers blessing upon you, and His angels [ask Him to do so] that He may bring you out from darkness into the light. And ever is He, to the believers, Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 33:43).
10. As a believer commits to works and sayings to have mercy from Allah through angels, he/she has to take angels as models in behavior that Allah always adheres to His angels.

4.3 Collective Human Ethics

Islamic ethics encompasses all the sub-categories of human ethics. Its main concern is the well-being of humans, as individuals and as communities, and how to elevate humans above their animalistic instincts. Social ethics in Islam is based on a series of moral values that regulate interactions among people. These moral values include: justice, truthfulness, forgiveness, chastity, courage, generosity, and others. These are moral values that most traditions and philosophies view as important for social and individual peace.

Social ethics is critical for social stability and well-being. In fact, it is the foundation of social structure and the only guarantee to safeguard the fabric of society. It protects social institutions, the rule of law, social development, and social unity in times of turmoil. Social morality is often classified into various categories depending on the social domains under consideration. For example, social ethics can be classified into family ethics, the Muslim community ethics, the nation state ethics, and global ethics. It is impossible to discuss all the Islamic moral values and how they apply in all social domains in details. Therefore, in the following sections, I will present a summary of the various subcategories of Islamic social morality.

4.3.1 The Ethics Of The Family

Islam pays special attention to the individual's ethics, so that the individual serves him/herself and the community. For an individual to fulfill this duty, it is necessary to find the other half that complements him/her, for men and women cannot do without each other: "You [believers] are of one another" (Holy Qur'an, 4:25). Therefore, this instinctive and inherent need for each other needs to be fulfilled according to the moral standards of Islam.

In Islam, the process of forming a family starts with a period of engagement, which is traditionally initiated by the man who proposes. This engagement is socially and religiously recognized when the woman and her family consent. Despite the diversity of cultural traditions, Islam requires that the man and the woman get to know each other by meeting to see each other and talk together. When Al-Mughirah Ibn Shu`bah proposed to a woman, the Prophet (PBUH) said to him: "Look at her, for indeed that is more likely to make things better between the two of you."⁽¹⁾ He told another man who wanted to marry a woman from Al-Ansar: "Look at her, for there is something in the eyes of the Ansar."⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated via Al-Mughirah Ibn Shu`bah by Ahmed (sound; 18137), Al-Tirmidhi (2087), Al-Nassa'i (3235), Ibn Majah (1865), all three on marriage, and Al-Albani in *Al-Shaḥīḥa* (corrected; 96).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on marriage (1424), Ahmed (7842), and Al-Nassa'i on marriage (3247).

Moreover, Muslim youths need to be as well-educated as possible about the jurisprudence of marriage. For example, they need to know about the rules that determine who they can marry and whom they cannot marry. Allah says: "Do not marry those [women] whom your fathers married, except what has already occurred. Indeed, it was an immorality and hateful [to Allah] and was evil as a way. Prohibited to you [for marriage] are your mothers, your daughters, your sisters, your father's sisters, your mother's sisters, your brothers' daughters, your sisters' daughters, your wet nurses, your sisters through nursing, your wives' mothers, and your step-daughters. But if you have not consummated the marriage, there is no sin upon you. And [prohibited are] the wives of your sons, and that you take [in marriage] two sisters simultaneously, except for what has already occurred. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 4:22-23).

It is also forbidden for Muslim men to marry women who are polytheists or atheists. Allah says: "Do not marry polytheistic women until they believe. And a believing slave woman is better than a polytheist [free woman], even if you like her. Do not marry polytheistic men [to your women] until they believe. And a believing slave is better than a polytheist [free man], even if you like him. Those invite [you] to the Fire, but Allah invites to Paradise and to forgiveness, by His permission. And He makes clear His verses to the people that perhaps they may remember" (Holy Qur'an, 2:221). This verse prohibits forming families with those who do not believe, for Allah says, "Whoever disbelieves in Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Last Day has certainly gone far astray" (Holy Qur'an, 4:136).

Muslim men; however, are permitted to marry women from the People of the Book who believe in the scriptures revealed to their prophets, such as Christians and Jews. Allah says: "This day [all] good foods have been made lawful to you, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is also lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers" (Holy Qur'an, 5:5).

Islam prohibits marrying women who are already married. A married woman can remarry only if she gets a divorce and after the completion of the waiting period. Allah says: "And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your right hands possess. [This is] the decree of Allah upon you" (Holy Qur'an, 4:24). Muslims are also forbidden from marrying adulterer men or women, unless they repent: "The adulterer shall not marry save an adulteress or an idolatress, and the adulteress none shall marry save an adulterer or an idolater. All that is forbidden to believers" (Holy Qur'an, 24:3). Aside from the above-mentioned exceptions,

Muslims are free to marry as they choose: “Lawful to you are [all others] beyond these, [provided] that you seek them [in marriage] with [gifts from] your property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. For whatever you enjoy [in marriage] to them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise” (Holy Qur’an, 5:24).

Islam offers some valuable insights into the best qualities to be sought in a spouse. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) says: “If a man with a good moral character and religious commitment comes to propose, then marry (your daughter or female relative under your guardianship) to him, for if you do not do that, there will be social strife and widespread corruption.”⁽¹⁾ He also said: “A woman is married for four reasons: her wealth, her social status, her beauty, and her religion. Marry the religious one; otherwise, you will regret it.”⁽²⁾ Abdullah Ibn Amr narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “This world is all but temporary joy, and the best temporary joy in this world is a righteous woman.”⁽³⁾

The engagement period is helpful for the couple to know each other, but they need to keep in mind that they are not married unless the marriage agreement is signed. This marriage agreement is a serious commitment, so much so that the Holy Qur’an refers to it as a “solemn oath”. It is not recommended that engaged couples spend time alone, which is becoming more acceptable. This is because engagements do not always end with marriage.

Islam also offers moral guidelines regarding dowries, which are gifts given by the groom to the bride prior to the wedding. The dowry itself is a requirement, and it is a gift that should not be confused with “bride price” or other non-Islamic and non-Arab cultural traditions. Islam rejects any views of women as commodities to be sold and bought. Allah says: “Give women [upon marriage] their [bridal] gifts graciously. But if they willingly give up any of it to you, then take it with satisfaction and ease” (Holy Qur’an, 4:4). Islam recommends that people should keep dowries reasonable and affordable. When Ali Ibn Abi Talib proposed to marry Fatima, the Prophet’s (PBUH) daughter, the Prophet (PBUH) asked him: “What do you have?” Ali responded: “I have nothing but a shield.” The Prophet (PBUH) said: “Then, give it to her.”⁽⁴⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also said: “The best of dowries

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Tirmidhi (1084), Ibn Majah (1967), both on marriage, and Al-Albani in *Al-Shāḥiḥa* (corrected; 1022).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on marriage (5090) and Muslim on nursing (1466).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-ʿAs by Muslim on nursing (1467), Ahmed (6567), Al-Nassaʿi (3232), and Ibn Majah (1855).

(4) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Abu Dawud (2125), Al-Nassaʿi (3375), both on marriage, and Al-Albani in *Shāḥiḥ Abū Dāwūd* (corrected; 1849).

are the simplest ones.”⁽¹⁾ In another version, he said: “The best of marriages are the simplest ones.”⁽²⁾

Dowries are an example of how culture sometimes violates the teachings of Islam in making marriage too costly and out of reach for many people. For example, dowries in India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, where the bride's father pays the dowry to the groom, are so excessive and extravagant that very few people can afford them. It is also becoming common in Egypt that the bride's father shoulders the responsibility of providing luxurious furniture for his daughter's new house. All these cultural patterns make it difficult for young people to get married. Religious scholars and social reformers need to collaborate to find ways to bring people back to the true tradition, because these new patterns are pushing the average marriage age upward.

Once the couple agrees on the culturally acceptable marriage arrangements, as long as they do not violate any religious rules, they can proceed with the wedding and start to enjoy their married life. Allah says: “Among His signs is that He created mates from yourselves for you, so that you may find joy in them; and He placed between you affection and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who give thought” (Holy Qur'an, 30:21); and “Allah has created mates from yourselves for you, and has created sons and grandchildren for you from your mates” (Holy Qur'an, 16:72). These verses explain the Islamic position toward the purpose of marriage. It is meant to promote peace, love, and joy in addition to procreation. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Marry the one who is fertile and loving, for I will boast of your great numbers.”⁽³⁾

Homosexuality is a disaster that has afflicted the modern world. It started in the West and then was promoted in other parts of the world and even accepted by some churches. This is a threat to the entire human race, and it is the evil doing of the People of Lot whom Allah has cursed for committing a sin that nobody committed before them. Allah says: “Do you approach males of all people and leave what your Lord has created for you as mates? You are a people who unjustly transgress” (Holy Qur'an, 26:165-166). Marriage also brings families together and establishes very strong social bonds. Allah says: “It is He who has created from water mankind and made them related through lineage and marriage” (Holy Qur'an, 25:54). Marriage also helps young people make their lives meaningful and turn

(1) Narrated via Uqba Ibn Amir by Al-Hakim on marriage (corrected; 2/181) and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi'* (corrected; 3279).

(2) Narrated via Uqba Ibn Amir by Abu Dawud (2117), Ibn Hibban (4072), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 1842).

(3) Narrated via Ma'qil Ibn Yasar by Abu Dawud (2050), Al-Nassa'i (3227), Abu Awanah (4018), Ibn Hibban (4056), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Abū Dāwūd* (corrected; 1789).

their houses into homes: "Righteous women devotedly guard (in their husbands') absence what Allah would have them guard" (Holy Qur'an, 4:34).

Islamic married life succeeds only if the couple have sincere intentions and the will to do right by each other. Patience is necessary for married life, as the couple need to be contented with what they have and make sure they do not allow ill-gotten money into their home. In the old days, a wife would pray for her husband as he left for work: "Don't bring back ill-gotten money. We would rather go hungry than eat from forbidden money. We can be patient while hungry, but nobody can be patient with hell fire." At the same time, the husband should be patient when asked to provide what he cannot afford. Allah has taught us to spend only what we have: "Let a man of wealth spend from his wealth, and he whose provision is restricted - let him spend from what Allah has given him. Allah does not charge a soul except [according to] what He has given it. Allah will bring about, after hardship, ease" (Holy Qur'an, 65:7).

Children are the joy of life, and nobody should think of children as a financial burden because they come to this world with the provisions that Allah has allotted to them. Pre-Islamic Arabs had a shameful tradition of killing their children because of their poverty. Ibn Masoud narrates that he asked the Prophet (PBUH): "What is the worst sin?" He said: "Making an equal to Allah, even though it is He who created you." He followed up: "Then what?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "To you kill your child fearing that he may share your food."⁽¹⁾ While Islam encourages people to have children, it warns against the preference of males. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that condemn these sins:

- *"Say, 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you. [Allah commands] that you not worship anything other than Him, and to treat you parents well, and do not kill your children out of poverty; We provide for you and them'" (Holy Qur'an, 6:151).*
- *"Do not kill your children for fear of poverty. We provide for them and for you. Indeed, their killing is ever a great sin" (Holy Qur'an, 17:31).*
- *"When [on the Day of Judgment] the girl [who was] buried alive is asked what sin she was killed for" (Holy Qur'an, 81:8-9).*
- *"Those who killed their children out of foolishness and without knowledge, prohibited what Allah had provided for them, and inventing untruth about Allah; they have indeed lost. They have gone astray and were not [rightly] guided" (Holy Qur'an, 6:140).*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4761) and Muslim on faith (86).

- *“When one of them is informed of [the birth of] a female, his face becomes dark, and he suppresses grief. He hides himself from people because of the ill of which he has been informed. Should he keep it in humiliation or bury it in the ground? Unquestionably, evil is what they decide” (Holy Qur’an, 16:58-59).*

The Holy Qur’an also offers a lot of valuable advice on how to maintain a happy married life. For example, it urges married people to be patient and kind to each other, even though pressures and tensions are always possible. Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, it is not lawful for you to inherit women by compulsion. Do not make difficulties for them in order to take [back] part of what you gave them, unless they commit a clear immorality. Live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike something that Allah makes therein much good. But if you want to replace one wife with another and you have given one of them a great amount [in gifts], do not take [back] anything from it. Would you take it in injustice and clear sin? How could you take it after being intimate and they have taken from you a solemn oath?” (Holy Qur’an, 4:19-21).

Monogamy is the norm in most cultures; however, there are certain circumstances where polygamy might help avoid major social problems. For example, when the ratio of men to women is skewed, say because of wars, polygamy can help protect social structure and morality. Pre-Islamic traditions and religions had no restrictions on the number of wives and concubines. Islam has introduced many restrictions on polygamy. For example, it limits the maximum number of wives to four: “If you fear that you will not deal justly with orphan girls, marry those you like, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one” (Holy Qur’an, 4:3). The Holy Qur’an also explains that being just to different wives is not possible: “You will never manage to be equal [in feelings] toward wives, even if you should strive [to do so]. Thus, do not incline completely [toward one] and leave another hanging” (Holy Qur’an, 4:129).

Islamic ethics does not allow forcing anyone to stay married to someone they do not like, because the norm in marriage is love and kindness. Otherwise, the marriage is not real. Islam also does not allow anyone to be forced into marriage. In fact, the marriage agreement is null if either party does not fully consent. However, if problems emerge after the marriage, one needs to be patient. If nothing changes, Allah has allowed Muslims to seek divorce: “Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] on acceptable terms or release [her] kindly” (Holy Qur’an, 2:229); and “Live with them in kindness. For if you dislike them - perhaps you dislike something that Allah makes therein much good” (Holy Qur’an, 4:19).

The Sunnah offers a lot of wisdom regarding divorce. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A believing man should not hate a believing woman; if he dislikes one of

her characteristics, he will be pleased with another.”⁽¹⁾ In other words, one needs to be patient with his wife because nobody is perfect. Rather, people should be realistic in their expectations and appreciate the good qualities of their spouses. Just as men are ordered to be patient with their wives, women are also ordered to be patient with their husbands. Allah says: “If a woman fears from her husband contempt or evasion, there is no sin upon them if they make terms of kind agreement between them - and kind agreement is best” (Holy Qur’an, 4:128). Divorce is a last resort when it is impossible to reach reconciliation. For example, the man can offer kind words, advice, warnings, and ignore her by turning his back on her in bed, and even acceptable hitting, which cannot be on the face or leave a mark. However, most women would not condone being beaten, and we have never heard of the Prophet (PBUH) hitting a woman, a servant, or even an animal. The Prophet (PBUH) has even urged men to be like him and never raise a hand to a woman.⁽²⁾

If a couple cannot reach agreement, it is possible to get their families involved to try and resolve their problems. Allah says: “If you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his family and an arbitrator from hers. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Acquainted [with all things]” (Holy Qur’an, 4:35). Omar gives an example of this type of family court. He sent two men to reconcile between a married couple, but they failed to resolve the issues. Omar told them to clear their intentions first, then go back and try again. They prayed and cleared their hearts, and they surely helped the couple reconcile.⁽³⁾

If reconciliation is impossible, divorce is permissible because as the traditional saying goes: “Nothing is more painful than the company of someone you cannot like and you cannot leave.” Islam allows divorce in three stages. The first two times are retractable, as the couple can change their minds and try to reconcile. The third time is final: “Divorce is twice. Then, either keep [her] on acceptable terms or release [her] kindly. It is not lawful for you to take anything of what you have given them unless both fear that they will not be able to keep [within] the limits of Allah. But if you fear that they will not keep [within] the limits of Allah, then there is no blame upon either of them concerning that by which she frees herself. These are the limits of Allah, so do not transgress them. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah - it is those who are the wrongdoers. If he has divorced her [for the third time], then she is not lawful to him afterward unless [after] she marries another husband. And if the latter husband divorces her [or dies], there is no blame upon the woman and her former husband to return to each other if they think that they can keep [within] the limits of Allah. These are the limits ordained

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah on nursing (1469) and Ahmed (8363).

(2) See hadith narrated via Aisha by Muslim (2328).

(3) See *The Revival* (2/49).

by Allah, which He makes clear to those who know” (Holy Qur’an, 2:229-230). Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence agree that divorce is a last resort following the hadith: “In the eyes of Allah, divorce is the least favored permissible thing.”⁽¹⁾

Divorce is followed by a waiting period, during which the wife stays in the couple’s house to give reconciliation a chance. Allah says: “Oh Prophet, when you [Muslims] divorce women, divorce them for [the commencement of] their waiting period and keep count of the waiting period, and fear Allah, your Lord. Do not turn them out of their houses, nor should they [themselves] move out [during that period] unless they have committed a clear [dishonorable] sin. Those are the limits [set by] Allah. And whoever transgresses the limits of Allah has certainly wronged himself. You do not know; perhaps Allah will bring about a [different] matter after that. When they have fulfilled their term, either retain them according to acceptable terms or part with them on acceptable terms. And bring two just men from among you to witness and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah. That is instructed to whoever should believe in Allah and the Last day. And whoever fears Allah - He will make for him a way out” (Holy Qur’an, 65:1-2).

The above quoted verses specify the terms of the waiting period. If the couple reconcile, they can resume their married life. If the waiting period expires without reconciliation, the divorce process is complete, and they cannot be married unless they reach a new marriage agreement and a new dowry. During that period, the husband is responsible for providing for the wife: “And their husbands have the right to take them back in this [period] if they want reconciliation” (Holy Qur’an, 2:228). The duration of the waiting period is three menstrual periods. However, if a woman is post-menopausal or her period is not regular, the waiting period is three months long: “And those who no longer expect menstruation among your women - if you doubt, then their waiting period is three months, and [also for] those who have not menstruated” (Holy Qur’an, 65:4). As for pregnant women, their waiting period extends until their pregnancy comes to term: “And for those who are pregnant, their term is until they give birth” (Holy Qur’an, 65:4).

The waiting period is actually not just for divorce. It is for all women who are no longer living with their husbands. For example, if the husband dies, the widow has to wait four months and 10 days before she gets married again: “And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - they, [the wives, shall] wait four months and 10 [days]. And when they have fulfilled their term, then there is no blame upon you for what they do with themselves in an acceptable manner” (Holy Qur’an, 2:234).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Abu Dawud (2178), Ibn Majah (2018), both on divorce, and Al-Albani in *Irwā’ Al-Ghālil* (2040).

Some of the obligations of a married man continue after divorce. For example, divorced women are entitled to financial support, which is not to be seen as a gift, *Zakat*, or support out of kindness. Allah says: "For divorced women is a provision according to what is acceptable - a duty upon the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 2:241). Moreover, the former husband has no right to harm the wife: "Do not harm them [your ex-wives] in order to oppress them" (Holy Qur'an, 65:6). Moreover, a divorced woman who has a newborn child has the right to breastfeed the child, if she so wishes, for two years, during which the ex-husband is financially responsible for her. Allah says: "Mothers may breastfeed their children for two complete years if they wish to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the fathers are the mothers' provisions and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them. And if you wish to have your children nursed by a substitute, there is no blame upon you as long as you give payment according to what is acceptable. And fear Allah and know that Allah is Seeing of what you do" (Holy Qur'an, 2:233); and "If they should be pregnant, then spend on them until they give birth. And if they breastfeed for you, then give them their payment and confer among yourselves in the acceptable way; but if you are in discord, then another woman may breastfeed for the father" (Holy Qur'an, 65:6).

Islam also offers detailed guidelines regarding inheritance. Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas once asked the Prophet (PBUH): "How much of one's property can be willed [for non-family members]? The third of one's property? A half? All of it?" The Prophet (PBUH) responded: "A third, and it is too much. It is better to leave your successors rich than leave them poor asking people for charity."⁽¹⁾ Allah says: "Prescribed for you when death approaches [any] one of you if he leaves wealth [is that he should make] a bequest for his parents and near relatives according to what is acceptable - a duty upon the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 2:180).

The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Allah has given all those who have rights their due, and there is no bequest to an heir."⁽²⁾ This hadith explains that the Holy Qur'an specifies the rights of all those who are entitled to the deceased person's property. However, these rights do not specify the shares of non-Muslim family members, such as a Christian or Jewish wife, or a parent who is not a Muslim. Thus, one can

(1) Narrated via Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas by Al-Bukhari (2742), Muslim (1628), Al-Nassa'i (3627), all three on inheritance and wills, and Ahmed (1440).

(2) Narrated via Abu Omama Al-Bahili by Ahmed (22294), Abu Dawud (2870), Al-Tirmidhi (2120), Ibn Majah (2713), all four on inheritance and wills, Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Talkhiṣ Al-Ḥabīr* (6/212), and Al-Albani in *Al-Jāmi' Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (2670).

bequeath a share of his/her property to non-heirs in a will, but not to the heirs listed in the Holy Qur'an, according to the following verses:

- *"For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share" (Holy Qur'an, 4:7).*
- *"Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male, a share equal to that of two females. But if there are [only] daughters, two or more, for them is two thirds of one's estate. If there is only one, for her is half. For one's parents, to each one of them is a sixth of his estate if he left children. But if he had no children and the parents [alone] inherit from him, then for his mother is one third. And if he had brothers [or sisters], for his mother is a sixth, after any bequest he [may have] made or debt. Your parents or your children - you know not which of them are nearest to you in benefit. [These shares are] an obligation [imposed] by Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise. And for you is half of what your wives leave if they have no children. But if they have a child, for you is one fourth of what they leave, after any bequest they [may have] made or debt. And for the wives is one fourth if you leave no children. But if you leave a child, then for them is an eighth of what you leave, after any bequest you [may have] made or debt. And if a man or woman leaves neither living parents nor children but has a brother or a sister, then for each one of them is a sixth. But if they are more than two, they share a third, after any bequest which was made or debt, as long as there is no detriment [caused]. [This is] an ordinance from Allah, and Allah is Knowing and Forbearing" (Holy Qur'an, 4:11-12).*
- *"[Oh Mohammed,] They request from you a [legal] ruling. Say, 'Allah gives you a ruling concerning one having neither living parents nor children [as heirs]'. If a man dies, leaving no child but [only] a sister, she will have half of what he left. And he inherits from her if she [dies and] has no child. But if there are two sisters [or more], they will have two thirds of what he left. If there are both brothers and sisters, the male will have the share of two females. Allah makes clear to you [His law], lest you go astray. And Allah is Knowing of all things" (Holy Qur'an, 4:176).*

These verses make it clear that no heir should try to take others' shares, and they make it forbidden for fathers to deprive some or all of their daughters or sons from their inheritance, or to favor the children of one wife over another in cases of polygamy. These are Allah's rules: "Say, 'Do you know better than Allah?'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:140).

Ethics As The Foundation Of Islamic Family Jurisprudence

Dr. Ahmed Al-Rayssouni, renowned scholar of Islamic Studies, notes that most of the rulings in the Holy Qur'an "are based on explicitly stated moral principles. This generalization applies to all areas of Islamic jurisprudence, including acts of worship, business interactions, domestic and international policies, and family relations. Scholars of Islamic jurisprudence have established certain principles that govern family relations. One such principle states that marriage is based on kindness,⁽¹⁾ or on forgiveness and generosity in some versions.⁽²⁾ For purposes of comparison, one can say that business interactions are based on financial interests, whereas marriage is based on mutual kindness.⁽³⁾ In other words, Islamic jurisprudence treats marriage as a relationship based on mutual kindness, which means that each party willingly fulfills their required duties toward the other, then goes above and beyond to secure the well-being of the other party. Moreover, this relationship requires that each party willingly gives up some rights as a show of kindness to the other. The self-serving approach to interactions, which is the norm in business deals, is not appropriate in the context of marriage. In summary, marriage in Islam is not a business deal or an exchange of benefits and/or services."⁽⁴⁾

Dr. Al-Rayssouni continues: "There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that expound on the nature of marriage in Islam. Marriage is a relationship that involves financial, physical, and emotional rights and obligations. These rights and obligations are governed by noble moral principles, such as kindness, forgiveness, and generosity. This is where it is important to note that some contemporary views of marriage are moving away from the moral model of marriage to a business model based on competition and self-interest. A marriage that involves competition and self-interest quickly becomes rife with conflict."

Temporary Marriage And A Case Study Of Islamic Ethics

Temporary marriage is a marriage where one or both parties intends to terminate the marriage at a specific point in the future. This is an ancient form of marriage, and it was common among men who travelled to faraway lands for years. If one could not take his wife with him or was not married in his homeland, he would get married with the intention of separation when it was time to go home or head to a different land. This form of marriage has always been a controversial

(1) See *Hāshiyat Al-Dusūqī 'alā Al-Sharḥ Al-Kabīr* by Al-Dardir (2/305), Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr, and *Al-Taḥrīr wal-Tanwīr* by Mohammed Al-Tahir Ibn 'Ashour, (4/24).

(2) See *Badā'i' Al-Ṣanā'i' fī Tartīb Al-Sharā'i'* by Alaa Al-Din Al-Kasani (2/183), 2nd edition, Dar Al-Kutub Al-Ilmiyya, 1986.

(3) See *Sharḥ Mukhtaṣar Khalīl Al-Kharāshī* (3/237), Beirut: Dar Al-Fikr.

(4) For more details, see Principle 1494, Vol 23 of *Ma'lamat Zāyid lil-Qawā'id Al-Fiqhiyya wal-Uṣūliyya*.

topic in Islamic jurisprudence, as most scholars accept it as a valid marriage, while others see it undesirable or even forbidden.

This ancient form of marriage has recently re-emerged and become more common than it has ever been. It is common among students who study abroad for years, the millions of immigrants and migrant workers who live abroad for years on end, and others who have to be away from their families for extended periods of time. Many of them get married while traveling with the intention of divorce when it is time to leave the host country. Sheikh Abdul Aziz Ibn Bazz and other Saudi scholars have accepted this form of marriage, but others have objected and considered it forbidden. The real issue is that there is a new phenomenon in the Gulf countries of wealthy men who travel temporally to get married, also temporarily. Some scholars even call this phenomenon “marriage tourism”, since the intention of travelling is to get married, and the intention is to end the marriage with divorce. This phenomenon became so widespread that many Islamic scholars sounded the alarm and banned it because it might involve deceiving the wife and her family, since they might not know about the husband’s intentions. This is indeed quite a complicated issue, but it will be sufficient to present two edicts that reflect the growing tendency to ban temporary marriage.

Edict 1: Issued By The Fatwa Center Of The Islam Web

“A marriage with the intention to divorce might have an item in the marriage agreement specifying its duration. This is a marriage for pleasure only, and it is forbidden. Such a marriage agreement is null. Alternatively, the husband might not express his intention to divorce in the marriage agreement. Most scholars, especially those of the Hanbali School, forbid this kind of marriage and consider the agreement to be null. For those scholars, intentions are equivalent to written agreements, because the Prophet (PBUH) says: “[The value of] an action depends on the intentions behind it.”⁽¹⁾ Hanbali scholars also forbid this form of marriage by analogy to “marriage for reconciliation”. For example, if a man divorces his wife three times, and they decide to get back together, they cannot unless she marries someone else and then gets divorced or he dies. To resolve this issue, some people would find a temporary husband for the wife who would marry her with the intention of divorcing her so that she would be able to remarry her former husband. Both types of marriage are forbidden in Hanbali jurisprudence.

Other scholars allow temporary marriage, provided that the intention is to terminate the marriage only if the husband has to leave the country, as in the case of students. The difference is that the divorce is caused by external factors and

(1) Narrated via Omar Ibn Al-Khattab by Al-Bukhari on the revelations (1) and Muslim on leadership (1907).

the intention is not to divorce. In other words, there is a chance that they would stay together if they could. This is Ibn Taymiya's opinion, which is valid in the sense that the definition of "marriage for pleasure only" does not apply. However, one might say that temporary marriage should be banned altogether because it is based on deception, which is clearly forbidden in the Sunnah. The wife, or her family, might not agree to the marriage if the husband's intention to leave her are made known. Besides, that same husband might not agree to allow someone to marry his own daughter temporarily with the intention of divorcing her once she served her purpose. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "One is not faithful unless he likes for his brother in faith what he likes for himself." Besides, allowing this form of marriage opens the doors to many social evils that can be disguised as temporary marriages. Finally, whether the wife is Muslim, Christian, or Jewish is irrelevant to this discussion, because deception is forbidden in all cases."⁽¹⁾

Edict 2: Issued By The European Council For Fatwa And Research

"A temporary marriage agreement is valid only on the technical side of documentation, because of the husband's deception. Marriage in Islam is about stability and continuity, with divorce as an exception. When a woman takes a man as a husband, she assumes continuous marriage. If she knows his intention is to marry her only temporarily, she would most likely refuse the marriage. Therefore, temporary marriages are forbidden."⁽²⁾

Al-Rayssouni concludes: "In summary, the main support for the argument in favor of temporary marriage is that it is different from "marriage for pleasure only", which is categorically forbidden in Sunni Islam. The difference is that the marriage documents do not specify the expiration date of the agreement, whereas "marriage for pleasure" specifies an end date that both parties agree on. In fact, marriage with the intent to divorce is worse than marriage for pleasure, because it is based on deception."

4.3.2 The Ethics Of Society

Expanding The Domain Of Good Deeds

Social ethics has such a special status in Islam that the faithful are highly rewarded for their actions that promote social well-being. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) says: "A day in the life of a just leader is more valuable than

(1) <http://fatwa.islamweb.net/fatwa>

(2) <http://e-cfr.org/new/?fatwa>

60 years of worship.”⁽¹⁾ He also says: “Do you know what is better than praying, fasting, and giving to charity? Helping people reconcile.”⁽²⁾ The Holy Qur’an considers doing public good as one of three components that constitute the mandate of the Muslim community: “Oh you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed. And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed any difficulty upon you in the religion” (Holy Qur’an, 22:77-78).

Doing good deeds is not limited to situations where only Muslims benefit from these deeds. Muslims have a duty to do good toward everyone, regardless of their religion, as long as they are peaceful. Allah says: “Allah does not forbid you from [interacting with] those who do not fight you because of religion - and do not expel you from your lands - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly” (Holy Qur’an, 60:8). In fact, Islam extends the domain of doing good deeds to include all living things. As we have seen earlier, the Prophet (PBUH) told of a prostitute who went to heaven for giving water to a thirsty dog, and a man whose sins were all forgiven because he did the same. Finally, Muslims are not only required to do good deeds, but also to encourage others to do the same. Allah says: “Let there be among you a community inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful” (Holy Qur’an, 3:104). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Whoever shows the way to doing good has the same reward as someone who actually does it.”⁽³⁾ Thus, if one cannot do good deeds, they should at least encourage others to do it, and if they can, they should at least have the intention to do it.

Justice

Justice is a fundamental moral ideal that serves as the cornerstone of Islamic ethics. In fact, a shared sense of justice is what keeps the peace within society and regulates everyday life. There are numerous verses in the Holy Qur’an that call on people to achieve justice, including:

- “When you testify, be just” (Holy Qur’an, 6:152).
- “Let a scribe record [debts] between you in justice” (Holy Qur’an, 2:282).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Tabarani (11/337), Al-Bayhaqi on faith (7379), Al-Iraqi in *Takhrīj Ahādīth Al-Ahyā’* (448), and Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Ḍa’īfai* (weak; 989).

(2) Narrated via Abu Al-Darda’ by Ahmed (sound; 27508), Abu Dawud on manners (4919), Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of the Day of Judgment (sound; 2509), and Al-Albani in *Takhrīj Al-Ḥalāl wal-Ḥarām* (corrected; 414).

(3) Narrated via Buraydah by Ahmed (23027).

- *"Bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 65:2).*
- *"When you judge between people judge with justice" (Holy Qur'an, 4:58).*
- *"But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one" (Holy Qur'an, 4:3).*
- *"Indeed, Allah orders justice and good conduct and giving to relatives" (Holy Qur'an, 16:90).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives. Whether one is rich or poor, Allah is more worthy of both. Do not follow your [personal] inclination, lest you be unjust" (Holy Qur'an, 4:135).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do" (Holy Qur'an, 5:8).*

These verses, and many others, emphasize the moral value of justice, which Muslims should observe in all their interactions, such as documenting loans, giving testimony, and governing. We also see justice as a foundation of family life, both among the husband and wife and also among children. The Prophet (PBUH) orders the faithful not to have favorites among their children: "Fear Allah and be just between your children."⁽¹⁾ Moreover, Muslims are required to observe justice with family, strangers, non-Muslims, and even enemies. At the same time, they are forbidden from unfairly favoring some people over others or from being unfair to those they dislike.

Islamic justice is for everyone, regardless of religion. There are nine verses in the Holy Qur'an that were revealed to protect a Jew who was unfairly accused of theft by some Muslims. They even lied to the Prophet (PBUH) in their testimonies. Allah says: "We have revealed to you, [Oh Mohammed], the Book in truth so that you may judge between people according to that which Allah has shown you. And do not be for the deceitful an advocate, and seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful. Do not argue on behalf of those who deceive themselves. Indeed, Allah loves not one who is a habitually sinful deceiver. They conceal [their evil intentions and deeds] from the people, but they cannot conceal [them] from Allah, and He is with them when they spend the night [scheming] as He does not approve. And ever is Allah, of what they do, encompassing. Here you are - those who argue on their behalf in [this] life - but who will argue with Allah

(1) Narrated via Al-Numan Ibn Bashir by Al-Bukhari (2587) and Muslim (1687), both on gifts.

for them on the Day of Resurrection, or who will [then] be their representative? Whoever wrongs himself but then seeks forgiveness of Allah will find Allah Forgiving and Merciful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:105-110).

Just as Islam commands people to observe justice, it forbids them from committing injustice. Allah says:

- *“Allah does not like those who are unjust” (Holy Qur’an, 3:57).*
- *“Allah does not guide those who are unjust” (Holy Qur’an, 2:258).*
- *“These are their houses, deserted because of the injustice they have done. Indeed, this is a sign for people who know” (Holy Qur’an, 27:52).*
- *“Those towns, We destroyed them when they became unjust, and We made for their destruction an appointed time” (Holy Qur’an, 18:59).*
- *“Do not incline toward those who do injustice, lest you be touched by the Fire” (Holy Qur’an, 11:113).*
- *“Those who have done injustice will find out to what [kind of] end they will be returned” (Holy Qur’an, 26:227).*

These verses, and many others, offer stern warnings to anyone who engages in unjust activities. Allah does not love those who commit injustice, which is the greatest punishment that leads to the destruction of communities. Even taking the side of those who do injustice is forbidden.

Perseverance

Perseverance is to patiently endure while doing one’s best to go above and beyond expectations. Perseverance is a moral value that is often commended in the Holy Qur’an. Allah says: “We will not allow the reward of anyone who did well in deeds to be lost” (Holy Qur’an, 18:30). Perseverance also applies when interacting patiently with people and doing right by them. Allah says: “And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, ‘Do not worship other than Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:83); and “Do good as Allah has done good to you” (Holy Qur’an, 28:77). Perseverance is an inherent component of faith, and Muslims should persevere in all their actions whether they are acts of worship or everyday activities.

There are many hadiths that encourage Muslims to persevere. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Allah has prescribed kindness for everything. When you kill, you must make the killing in the best manner; when you slaughter, make your slaughter in the best manner. Let one of you sharpen his knife and give ease to

his animal.”⁽¹⁾ The phrase “Allah has prescribed” makes it unambiguous that persevering in kindness is a requirement on par with justice, as the same phrase is used in the verses, “Oh you who have believed, prescribed for you is legal retribution for those murdered” (Holy Qur’an, 2:178); and “Oh you who have believed, decreed [and prescribed] upon you is fasting” (Holy Qur’an, 2:183). The Prophet (PBUH) also says: “Allah loves for you to do your best.”⁽²⁾ In another hadith, he says: “Human perfection is to worship Allah as if you see Him. If you do not achieve this state of devotion, then assume that Allah sees you.”⁽³⁾ This hadith, which establishes the connection between faith and perseverance, reiterates the verses: “And who is better in religion than one who submits himself to Allah while being a doer of good and following the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth? And Allah took Abraham as an intimate friend” (Holy Qur’an, 4:125); and “Whoever submits his face to Allah while he is a doer of good - then he has grasped the most trustworthy handhold” (Holy Qur’an, 31:22).

There are many other verses in the Holy Qur’an that tell us about the rewards for those who persevere in doing good deeds to achieve human perfection. For example, Allah says:

- *“Indeed, Allah is with the doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 29:69).*
- *“Indeed, Allah is with those who fear Him and those who are doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 16:128).*
- *“Do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 2:195).*
- *“Bring good tidings to the doers of good” (Holy Qur’an, 22:37).*
- *“For those who do good in this world is good” (Holy Qur’an, 16:30).*
- *“For those who have done good is the best [reward] and extra. No darkness will cover their faces, nor will humiliation. They will be companions in Paradise, and they will abide therein eternally” (Holy Qur’an, 10:26).*
- *“Is the reward for good [anything] but good?” (Holy Qur’an, 55:60).*

The following verses encourage us to persevere patiently in treating certain people particularly well. They also establish a strong connection between persevering in doing well and revering Allah:

- *“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther*

(1) *Sunan Al-Nassā’i* (4411).

(2) Narrated via Aisha by Abu Ya’la (4386), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (897), Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Shu’ab* on holding one’s tongue (5314), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (1113).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (50) and Muslim (9), both on faith.

away, the companion at your side, the traveler, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful” (Holy Qur’an, 4:36).

- *“The righteous [who revere Him] will be in gardens and springs, accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were doers of good. They used to sleep only a little a night, and in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness” (Holy Qur’an, 51:15-18).*

Mercy

Mercy is one of the greatest moral values in Islam, so much so that the Holy Qur’an uses mercy as a synonym for the Prophet’s (PBUH) message. Allah says: “We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds” (Holy Qur’an, 21:107). The Prophet (PBUH) describes himself in the hadith: “I am only a mercy sent down to you.”⁽¹⁾ Allah is the Merciful, and he has promised salvation and rewards for those who have mercy on others. The Sunnah emphasizes the importance of mercifulness in many hadiths, including:

- *“No mercy for those who have no mercy on others.”⁽²⁾*
- *“Have mercy on those on earth so that He who is in heaven would have mercy on you.”⁽³⁾*
- *“Whoever shows no mercy to the young or respect for the elderly is not one of us.”⁽⁴⁾*
- *“Only the merciful go to heaven, which is itself a manifestation of Allah’s mercy.” Someone commented: “We are all merciful.” The Prophet corrected him: “It is not about mercy to your families, but mercy to all.”⁽⁵⁾*

These hadiths show that the Islamic approach to mercy does not distinguish between people based on race, social class, or even religion. In fact, mercy is required in Islam even toward enemies and prisoners of war. Allah says: “They

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Hakim on faith (1/35) and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 490).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on manners (5997) and Muslim on virtue (2318).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (6494), Abu Dawud on manners (4941), Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (sound; 1924), Al-Hakim, also on kinship relations, (4/159), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 925).

(4) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (sound; 6733), Abu Dawud on manners (4943), and Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (sound; 1920).

(5) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari by Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (citing Al-Tabarani; 3409), Al-Haythami in *Majma` Al-Zawā'id* (13671), Al-Nassa'i in *Al-Kubrā* on legal rulings (5928), and Al-Hakim on kinship relations (4/167).

give food in spite of [their] love for it to the needy, the orphan, and the captive” (Holy Qur’an, 67:8). We have already discussed Islamic mercy toward animals in earlier sections. These concepts of mercy toward enemies and animals appeared in Islam 13 centuries before the West developed the concepts of human rights and animal rights.

Fulfillment Of The Covenant

Islamic ethics emphasizes that the faithful should fulfill their covenants toward Allah, themselves, each other, and even their enemies. If one makes a vow or a promise, they have to abide by it. Breaking one’s vows or promises is a sin. Allah says:

- *“Among them are those who made a covenant with Allah, [saying]: ‘If He should give us from His blessings, we will surely spend on charity, and we will surely be among the righteous’. But when he gave them from His blessings, they were stingy and they turned away and refused to give. He punished them with hypocrisy in their hearts until the Day they will meet Him - because they failed Allah in what they promised and because they [habitually] used to lie. Did they not know that Allah knows their secrets and their private conversations and that Allah is the Knower of the unseen?” (Holy Qur’an, 9:75-78).*
- *“They [Allah’s faithful servants] fulfill [their] vows and fear a Day whose evil will be widespread” (Holy Qur’an, 76:7).*
- *“He who breaks his word only breaks it to his detriment. And he who fulfills what he has promised Allah - He will give him a great reward” (Holy Qur’an, 48:10).*
- *“Oh you who have believed, fulfill [all] contracts” (Holy Qur’an, 5:1).*
- *“And fulfill the covenant of Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 6:152)*
- *“And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, everyone will be held responsible for their commitments” (Holy Qur’an, 17:34).*
- *“Fulfill the covenant of Allah when you have taken it, [Oh believers], and do not break oaths after their confirmation while you have made Allah, over you, a witness. Indeed, Allah knows what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 16:91).*

These verses, and many others, explain the Islamic position on covenant. Breaking one’s covenants is not only a sin, but a sign of hypocrisy, and it is punished in this world and in the hereafter. When people honor their agreements and prom-

ises, written or otherwise, they trust each other, and this trust promotes social stability. We also see many Sunnah texts that emphasize the value of fulfilling one's promises and commitments. For example, Hudhayfah, one of the Prophet's (PBUH) companions, told the Prophet (PBUH) on the day of the Battle of Badr that the unbelievers of Quraysh had captured him and his father on their way to Medina. They let him and his father go unharmed on condition that he would not fight on the Prophet's (PBUH) side. When the Prophet (PBUH) heard that, he ordered him to stay behind and not join the Muslim army.⁽¹⁾

Truthfulness

Truthfulness is a universal moral value that makes it possible for people to trust each other. In Islam, people are not only required to be truthful in what they say, but also in what they do and what they intend to say or do. Allah commands us to be truthful with Allah, people, and ourselves. To be truthful is to tell the truth as it matches reality or our honest understanding of it, but truthfulness in actions is to act honestly in a way that reflects what we believe. Being untruthful is a form of hypocrisy, which is a grave sin. The Holy Qur'an praises truthful people and also condemns liars and hypocrites:

- *"When the hypocrites come to you, [Oh Mohammed], they say: 'We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah'. And Allah knows that you are His Messenger, and Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars" (Holy Qur'an, 63:1).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, why do you say what you do not do? Saying what you do not do is despicable in the eyes of Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 61:2-3).*
- *"Mention [Oh Mohammed] Ishmael in the Book. Indeed, he was true to his promise, and he was a messenger and a prophet" (Holy Qur'an, 19:54).*

The Prophet (PBUH) says: "There are three signs of a hypocrite: When he speaks, he tells lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays his trust."⁽²⁾

Truthfulness with Allah presupposes a firm belief that He knows everything about us, not only what we do in public, but also what we do in secret, what we think, how we feel, and what we wish for. To be truthful with ourselves is to be realistic and honest with ourselves. People can deceive others and tell them lies, but it difficult to lie to oneself. To be truthful with others is to be honest with them

(1) Narrated via Hudhayfah by Muslim on jihad and the companions' biographies (1787) and Ahmed (23354).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (33) and Muslim (107), both on faith.

and never deceive them. Truthfulness is critical to one's faith because it has many consequences. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) says: "Truth leads to piety, and piety leads to Paradise. If a man continues to tell the truth and makes truth his object, he will be recorded in Allah's presence as eminently truthful. Falsehood leads to vice, and vice leads to the Hell, and a man persists in telling lies until he is recorded as a liar."⁽¹⁾ Allah says:

- *"Oh you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful" (Holy Qur'an, 9:119).*
- *"Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is to believe in Allah, the Last Day, the angels, the Book, and the prophets, and to give wealth [to charity], in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, travelers, those who ask, and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes prayer and gives Zakat; [those who] fulfill their promises when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 2:177).*
- *"The believers are only the ones who have believed in Allah and His Messenger and then doubt not but strive with their properties and their lives in the cause of Allah. It is those who are the truthful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:15).*

Telling lies is inherently evil, even though some people claim that there are permissible "white lies". All lies are sinful with only three exceptions: if a lie promotes social stability, if a lie is told under duress during war, and if it is intended to please one's wife. Ibn Shihab says that he never heard of exemptions for telling lies except for three cases: in times of war, bringing reconciliation among people, and between a married couple."⁽²⁾

Thinking Well Of Others

This moral value is about giving people the benefit of the doubt and avoiding judgmental attitudes. The traditional saying goes: "Two traits have all the goodness of the world: thinking well of Allah and thinking well of people. And two traits have all the evil in the world: thinking poorly of Allah and thinking poorly of people."⁽³⁾ The prophet (PBUH) say: "Beware of conjecture, for it is the most untrue of speech."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari on manners (6094) and Muslim on family relations (2607).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Shihab by Al-Bukhari on reconciliation (2692) and Muslim on family relations (2605). Al-Bukhari does not include the part of Ibn Shihab.

(3) See Al-Ghazali's *The Revival* (2/208).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on the commandments (6724) and Muslim on kindness and relationships (2563).

The Holy Qur'an issues stern warnings against being judgmental and assuming evil. Allah says:

- *"Oh you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumptions. Indeed, some assumptions are sinful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:12).*
- *"Indeed, those who came with falsehood are a group among you. Do not think it bad for you. Rather, it is good for you. For every person among them is what [punishment] he has earned from this sin, and he who took upon himself the greater portion thereof - for him is a great punishment. Why, when you heard it, did not the believing men and believing women think good of one another and say, 'This is an obvious falsehood?' Why did they [who slandered] not produce four witnesses? And when they do not produce the witnesses, then it is they who are the liars in the sight of Allah" (Holy Qur'an 24:11-13).*

Assuming that people are evil or wrongdoers leads to curiosity into their private lives and spying on them, both of which are forbidden. These poor moral qualities also lead to speaking ill of people, especially behind their backs when they cannot defend themselves. This is why Allah commands us not to go down this spiral of evil: "Do not spy on, or backstab each other" (Holy Qur'an, 49:12). There are many hadiths and traditional sayings that offer moral wisdom in this regard:

- *Ibn Omar narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) once took to the pulpit and called out raising his voice: "Oh you who have accepted Islam with their tongues, while faith has not reached your hearts! Do not harm the Muslims, revile them, or spy on them to expose their secrets. Indeed, whoever tries to expose his Muslim brother's secrets, Allah exposes his secrets, even if he were hiding in the farthest corner of his house."⁽¹⁾*
- *Ibn Omar once looked at the Ka'ba and said: "How honorable are you, and how sacred are you! Yet, a believer's honor is more sacred to Allah than yours."⁽²⁾*
- *Jabir narrates that three days prior to the Prophet's (PBUH) death, he said: "None of you should die unless he expects kindness from Allah."⁽³⁾*
- *Hayyan Abu Al-Nadir narrates: "I once went to visit Yazid Ibn Al-Aswad when he was on his deathbed. I ran into Wathila Ibn Al-Asqa at Yazid's house and we saw Yazid together. Wathila asked Yazid: 'What do you expect from*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Tirmidhi (2032).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Hibban 5763), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2339).

(3) Narrated via Jabir by Muslim on descriptions of heavens (2877) and Ahmed (14125).

Allah?’ He said: ‘I know He will be kind to me’. Wathila commented: ‘I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: Allah has said, I am for each servant what he thinks of me, good or otherwise.’ ”⁽¹⁾

Kindness To Parents

In Islam, showing kindness toward parents comes second only to worshipping Allah alone, which is the same status of parents in other monotheistic religions. Allah says:

- *“Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good” (Holy Qur’an, 4:36).*
- *“Your Lord has decreed that you worship none except Him, and to parents, good treatment” (Holy Qur’an, 17:23).*
- *“Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the [final] destination” (Holy Qur’an, 31:14).*
- *“And [recall] when We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], ‘Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 2:83).*
- *“[Jesus] said, ‘Indeed, I am a servant of Allah. He has given me the Scripture and made me a prophet. And He has made me blessed wherever I am and has enjoined upon me prayers and Zakat as long as I live. And [made me] dutiful to my mother, and He has not made me a wretched tyrant’ ” (Holy Qur’an, 19:30-32).*
- *“[Allah] said: ‘Oh John, take the Scripture with determination’. And We made him rule [while still] a boy. And affection from Us and purity, and he was fearing of Allah. And dutiful to his parents, and he was not a disobedient tyrant” (Holy Qur’an, 19:12-14).*
- *“Whether one or both of them [your parents] reach old age [while] with you, say not to them [so much as], ‘ugh’, and do not reproach them, but speak to them kindly” (Holy Qur’an 17:23).*

The traditional wisdom says: “If there was a word less offensive than ‘ugh’, Allah would have forbidden saying it to one’s parents.”⁽²⁾ The Holy Qur’an uses an interesting expression to describe the relationship between children and their

(1) Narrated by Ibn Hibban (641) and Al-Tabarani (22/87).

(2) See *Al-Firdaws bi-Ma’t’hūr Al-Khiṭāb* by Al-Daylami (3/353).

parents. It says: "And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy and say, 'My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] young'" (Holy Qur'an, 17:24). The metaphor for humility used in this verse is seen only in one other context, namely the relationship between the faithful who are "humble toward the believers, powerful against the disbelievers" (Holy Qur'an, 5:54). The Holy Qur'an also gives many examples of how the prophets treated their parents, such as Ismail and his father Abraham, Joseph and his father Jacob, Solomon and his father David, Yahya [John] and his father Zachariah, and Jesus and his mother Mary. These examples offer role models for Muslims to follow in their treatment of their parents.

Kindness toward parents, especially in their old age, has a special place in the Sunnah as we see in the many hadiths that emphasize this moral obligation:

- *Amr Ibn Al-`As narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) asking his permission to join him in battle. The Prophet (PBUH) asked him: "Are your parents alive?" The man said "Yes." The Prophet said: "Do your jihad by taking care of them."*⁽¹⁾
- *In Muslim's version, the man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "I come to swear allegiance to you for migration and jihad seeking reward only from Allah." The Prophet asked him if either of his parents were alive, and the man said, "yes, both." The Prophet asked: "Do you want to seek reward from Allah? He said, "Yes." The Prophet said: "Go back to your parents and treat them kindly."*⁽²⁾
- *In another version: A man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "I have come to swear allegiance to you for migration and left my parents crying." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Go back to your parents, and make them laugh just like you made them cry."*⁽³⁾
- *Anas Ibn Malik narrates that a man came the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "I desire to fight on your side, but I am not fit enough for battle." The Prophet asked him: "Is either of your parents alive?" The man answered: "My mother is." The Prophet said: "Ask Allah sincerely and earnestly for forgiveness by taking good care of her. If you do, you will get the reward of a fighter and a pilgrim."*⁽⁴⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on jihad and biographies (3004).

(2) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2549).

(3) Narrated by Abu Ya'la (6833), Abu Dawud on jihad (2528), Al-Nassa'i on allegiance (4163), Ibn Majah on jihad (2782), Al-Hakim on kinship relations (4/153), and Ibn Al-Mulaqqin in *Al-Badr Al-Munir* (9/40).

(4) Narrated by Abu Ya'la (2760), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* (4466), *Al-Saghir* (218), *Al-Diyar Al-Mukhtara* (references corrected; 1857), and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawaid* (13399).

- *Mu`awiya Ibn Jahima narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said: "I wish to join in battle and I would like your advice." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do you have a mother?" The man said, "yes." The Prophet said: "Stay with her, for heaven is at her feet."⁽¹⁾ In another version, the Prophet (PBUH) asked him if his parents were alive. When he answered affirmatively, he said: "Stay with them, for heaven is at their feet."⁽²⁾*
- *Abu Al-Darda' narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) one day and said: "I have a wife, but my mother is ordering me to divorce her." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "A parent is the middle gate of Paradise [i.e., the best way to Paradise]. It is up to you whether you take advantage of it or not."⁽³⁾*
- *Ibn Omar narrates that he was married to a woman whom he loved dearly, but his father hated her. He told him to divorce her but he refused. Ibn Omar went to the Prophet (PBUH) and told him. The Prophet (PBUH) told him that he should comply and divorce her."⁽⁴⁾*
- *Thawban narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "A man is deprived of his provision for his sins. Nothing turns back Allah's Decree but prayers, and nothing increases one's life except righteousness toward parents."⁽⁵⁾*
- *Ibn Omar narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Be kind to your parents, and your children will be kind to you. Be virtuous and the women in your families will also be virtuous."⁽⁶⁾*
- *Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Disgrace! Disgrace! Disgrace!" The companions asked: "Who is disgraced?" He said: "He whose parents, or one of them, reach old age, but he does not go to heaven."⁽⁷⁾*

(1) Narrated by Al-Nassa'i (3104), Ibn Majah (2781), Al-Hakim (2/104), all three on jihad, and Al-Albani in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2485).

(2) Narrated by Al-Tabarani (2/289), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (3751), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (2485). Note that these hadiths apply only in cases where jihad is not fully mandated. If the unbelievers invade the lands of the Muslims, they are all required to heed the call for jihad even if they have elderly parents. Also, these hadiths do not apply if the parents are unbelievers.

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (21717), Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1900), Ibn Majah on manners (3663), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (914).

(4) Narrated by Ahmed (5011), Abu Dawud on manners (5138), Al-Tirmidhi on divorce (1189), and Ibn Majah on divorce (2088). It is important to note that this hadith applies only to those parents with insight and faith. Imam Ahmed was asked about this hadith in a similar situation, and he responded, "If your father is like Omar, then divorce her."

(5) Narrated by Ahmed (22413) without the sentence "A man is deprived of his provision for his sins," Ibn Majah on social strife (4022), Ibn Hibban (872), and Al-Hakim on prayers (1/493).

(6) Narrated by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsaṭ* (1002), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (corrected references; 3759), and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (13403).

(7) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2551), Ahmed (7451), and Al-Tirmidhi on prayers (3545).

- *Abu Hurayrah narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked him: "Who is worthiest of my kindness?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Your mother." The man asked "Who else?" The Prophet said: "Your mother." The man repeated his question and got the same answer, but when he asked a fourth time, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Then your father."*⁽¹⁾
- *Asma narrates: "My mother came to me once expecting kindness while she hated Islam and was a polytheist. I asked the Prophet (PBUH) if I should be kind to her. He replied: 'Yes, be kind to her.'"*⁽²⁾
- *Abdullah Ibn Dinar narrates that he was once with Abdullah Ibn Omar when they ran into a Bedouin on the road to Mecca. Ibn Omar greeted the man and dismounted from his donkey to let the Bedouin ride. Then, he took off his turban and gave it to him. Ibn Dinar was surprised and said to Ibn Omar: "He is Bedouin, and Bedouins are used to walking." Ibn Omar responded: "His father was a friend of my father, and I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: 'The best kindness is the kindness shown by a man to the people his father was kind to.'"*⁽³⁾
- *Abu Burdah narrates that he visited Medina one day, and Abdullah Ibn Omar came to visit him. Ibn Omar said: "Do you know why I came to see you?" "No," said Abu Burdah. Ibn Omar responded: "I heard the Prophet (PBUH) say: 'If you want to maintain your relationship with your deceased father, maintain your relationship with the people he liked in his life'. My father was friends with your father, and I wanted to maintain that relationship."*⁽⁴⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) also warned against ingratitude and unkindness toward parents, which he considered to be similar to the most serious sins, such as polytheism, murder, and giving false testimonies:

- *Abu Bakrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Do you know what the gravest sins are? To worship other than Allah, to be unkind to your parents, and to give a false testimony."*⁽⁵⁾
- *Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-'As narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The gravest sins are to worship other than Allah, unkindness toward the parents, murder, and false oaths."*⁽⁶⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5971), Muslim on kinship relations (2548), Ahmed (8344), and Ibn Majah in *Al-Waṣāyā* (2706).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on gifts (2620) and Muslim on alms (1003).

(3) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2552) and Ahmed (5653).

(4) Narrated by Abu Ya'la (5669), Ibn Hibban on kinship relations (432), and Al-Albani in *Al-Saḥīḥa* (1432).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5976), Muslim on faith (87), Ahmed (20385), and Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1901).

(6) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on oaths (6675), Ahmed (6884), and Al-Nassa'i on murder (4011).

- *The Prophet (PBUH) said: "For a man to insult his parents is a major sin." He was asked, "How would a man insult his parents?" He replied: "He insults a man's father, who in return insults his father, and he insults a man's mother who in return insults his mother."*⁽¹⁾

Maintaining Kinship Ties

Maintaining kinship ties is a core social moral value in Islam. As Islam commands showing kindness to parents, it also commands maintaining good kinship ties. Kinship here means the extended family, including relatives both on the father's side, the mother's side, and the children's side. There are many verses in the Holy Qur'an that stress the importance of maintaining kinship ties and warn against the consequences of severing them. Allah says:

"Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, and the needy" (Holy Qur'an, 4:36).

- *"They ask you, [Oh Mohammed], what they should spend. Say, 'Whatever you spend of good is [to be] for parents and relatives and orphans and the needy and the traveler. And whatever you do of good - indeed, Allah is Knowing of it' " (Holy Qur'an, 2:215).*
- *"Prescribed for you when death approaches [any] one of you, if he leaves wealth [he should make] a bequest for the parents and near relatives, according to what is acceptable - a duty upon the righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 2:180).*⁽²⁾
- *"Fear Allah, through whom you ask one another, and the wombs [family ties]. Indeed, Allah is ever, over you, an Observer" (Holy Qur'an, 4:1).*
- *"Those of [blood] relations are more entitled [to inheritance] in the decree of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Knowing of all things" (Holy Qur'an, 8:75).*
- *"Give the relative his right, and [also] the poor and the traveler, and do not spend wastefully" (Holy Qur'an, 17:26).*
- *"Give the relative his right, as well as the needy and the traveler. That is best*

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5973), Muslim on faith (90), Abu Dawud on manners (5141), and Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1902).

(2) This verse is often interpreted to require grandparents to leave some of their wealth to their grandchildren, if their parents are deceased. The grandchildren's share should be equivalent to what their parents would have inherited, as long as it does not exceed the limit to be bequeathed. This type of living will is often discussed in Islamic jurisprudence as "obligatory will."

for those who desire the countenance of Allah, and it is they who will be the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 30:38).⁽¹⁾

- *"For men is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, and for women is a share of what the parents and close relatives leave, be it little or much - an obligatory share" (Holy Qur'an, 4:7).*
- *"Would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your kinship ties? Those [who do so] are the ones that Allah has cursed, so He deafened them and blinded their vision" (Holy Qur'an, 47:22-23).*
- *"Allah instructs you concerning your children" (Holy Qur'an, 4:11).*

Every Muslim is required to maintain strong family relations with priority given to parents, especially in their old age. Children and siblings come next, as the whole family is like one body that cannot stay healthy if a member is not. This duty extends to all relatives. Miskeen Al-Dirami writes:

Stay close to your brother, for a man without his brethren

Is a warrior heading to battle with no horse or weapon.

An eagle needs wings to soar, and your wings are your cousin.

There are many hadiths that encourage us to be dutiful toward our relatives, even if they do not reciprocate or mistreat us. These hadiths also describe the rewards, both in this life and in the afterlife, for kindness toward relatives. Below are some of those hadiths.

- *Ibn Omar narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) saying: "Oh Prophet, I have committed a grave sin. What can I do?" The Prophet (PBUH) asked him: "Do you have a mother?" "No," said the man. The Prophet then asked: "Do you have an aunt [on your mother's side]?" The man said "Yes." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Be kind to her."⁽²⁾*
- *Anas Ibn Malik narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "He who desires ample provisions and a long life, should maintain good ties with his blood relatives."⁽³⁾*
- *Abu Ayyub narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) was once traveling with his companions when a Bedouin appeared before him and grabbed the nose-*

(1) This verse and the preceding one are among the earliest verses to be revealed, suggesting that the rights of family members were established from the onset of Islam.

(2) Narrated Al-Tirmidhi (1904), Ibn Hibban (435), Al-Hakim (4/155), all three on kinship relations, Ahmed (4624), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhib* (2504).

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5986), Muslim on kinship relations (2557), and Ahmed (13585).

band of his camel to stop it. The Bedouin said: "Oh Prophet of Allah, tell me what I can do to get close to Paradise and away from Hell." The Prophet (PBUH) stopped for a while and cast a glance upon his companions, then he said: "He [the Bedouin] had been guided well." He then turned to the Bedouin and said: "Worship Allah alone, establish prayers, and pay Zakat, and do good to your relatives."⁽¹⁾

- Aisha narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The womb is attached to the Throne. The womb says, 'He who keeps me connected, Allah will connect him. He who severs me, Allah will sever him'."⁽²⁾
- Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Allah created the Creation, and when He was done, the womb got up and said: 'I seek refuge with You from those who sever kinship ties'. Allah said: 'Will you be satisfied if I bestow My favors on those who keep your ties, and withhold them from those who sever them?' The womb said: 'Yes!' Allah said: 'You have been granted that.'"⁽³⁾ Then, the Prophet (PBUH) recited: "Would you perhaps, if you turned away, cause corruption on earth and sever your [ties of] relationship? Those [who do so] are the ones that Allah has cursed, so He deafened them and blinded their vision. Do they not reflect upon the Holy Qur'an, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?" (Holy Qur'an, 47:22-24).
- Abu Hurayrah also narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The womb [Rahim] is named after Al-Rahman [The Merciful]. Whoever connects it, Allah connects him, and whoever severs it, Allah severs him."⁽⁴⁾
- Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-'As narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Maintaining one's kinship ties is not adequate. What is adequate is to reconnect kinship ties when they are severed."⁽⁵⁾
- Abu Hurayrah narrates that a man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and complained: "Oh Prophet of Allah, I have relatives with whom I try to maintain good relationships, but they have severed relations with me. When I treat them kindly, they treat me poorly." The Prophet (PBUH) replied: "If you are as you have said, then it is as though you are feeding them hot ashes, and you will not be without a support from Allah against them, as long as you do so."⁽⁶⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on *Zakat* (1396) and Muslim on faith (13).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5989), Muslim on kinship relations (2555), and Ahmed (24336).

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4830), Muslim on kinship relations (2554), and Ahmed (8367).

(4) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5988), Ibn Hibban on kinship relations (441), and Ahmed (8975).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5991), Ahmed (6785), Abu Dawud on *Zakat* (1697), Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1908).

(6) Narrated by Muslim on kinship relations (2558) and Ahmed (7992).

- *Umm Kalthoum Bint Uqbah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The best charity is what is given to a relative who hides enmity."*⁽¹⁾
- *Uqbah Ibn Amir narrates that he once ran into the Prophet (PBUH). He greeted him and grabbed his hands saying: "Oh Prophet of Allah, tell me which deeds are the best." The Prophet (PBUH) said: "Stay in touch with your relatives who stay away from you, give to those who do not give to you when you need their help, and do not reciprocate if someone does injustice to you."*⁽²⁾ *Al-Hakim's version continues: "He who wants to live longer and enjoy ample provision should maintain his family ties."*
- *Abu Bakrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "No sin is more worthy of eminent punishment in this world on top of the punishment in the afterlife than prostitution and severing family ties."*⁽³⁾
- *Jubair Ibn Mut'im narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "He who severs his family ties is never allowed into heaven."*⁽⁴⁾

Kindness And Generosity Toward Neighbors

The Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah instruct us to act kindly toward our neighbors, whether they are relatives or not, next door neighbors or not, and whether they are Muslims or not. Allah says: "Worship Allah and associate nothing with Him, and to parents do good, and to relatives, orphans, the needy, the near neighbor, the neighbor farther away, the companions at your side, the travelers, and those whom your right hands possess. Indeed, Allah does not like those who are self-deluding and boastful" (Holy Qur'an, 4:36). Moreover, Muslims are required to fulfill their duties toward their neighbors as stated in many hadiths, including:

- *Al-Miqdad Ibn Al-Aswad reports that the Prophet (PBUH) asked his companions about adultery, and they said: "It is forbidden. Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) have made it forbidden." He said: "It is worse for a man to commit adultery with his neighbor's wife than with 10 women who are not." Then, he asked them about stealing. They replied: "It is forbidden. Allah and His*

(1) Narrated by Ibn Khuzaymah on *Zakat* (2386), Al-Tabarani (25/80), Al-Hakim on *Zakat* (1/406), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (894).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (17334), Al-Hakim on kinship relations (4/161), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 891).

(3) Narrated by Abu Dawud on manners (4902), Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of Judgment Day (2511), Ibn Majah on asceticism (4211), Al-Hakim on exegesis (2/356), and Ibn Hibban (455).

(4) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (5984) and Muslim on kinship relations (2556).

Prophet have made it forbidden." He said: "It is worse for a man to steal from his neighbor's house than from 10 houses that are not."⁽¹⁾

- *Abu Hurayrah and Abu Shurayh narrate that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "By Allah, he is not a believer!" He repeated it three times until someone asked: "Who is that, Oh Messenger of Allah?" He said: "One whose neighbor does not feel safe from his evil."*⁽²⁾
- *The Prophet (PBUH) said: "By Allah, one does not truly believe until he wishes for his neighbor what he wishes for himself." In other versions, he said: "... his brother."*⁽³⁾
- *Ibn Abbas narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "He who goes to bed while [knowing that] his neighbor is hungry is not faithful."*⁽⁴⁾
- *Ibn Omar and Aisha narrate that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Gabriel kept emphasizing kindness toward my neighbors so much that I thought he would order me to make them my heirs."*⁽⁵⁾
- *Saad Ibn Abi Waqqas narrates that that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Four things bring happiness: a good wife, a spacious home, a kind neighbor, and a pleasant ride. And four things bring pain: an unkind neighbor, a bad wife, an unpleasant ride, and a narrow house."*⁽⁶⁾

Caring For Orphans And The Poor

Islam makes it everyone's moral duty to care for those who cannot fend for themselves, especially orphans. Those children are in Allah's protection, and nobody is allowed to hurt them or unjustly take whatever property or money they might have. Those who are extremely poor are also in Allah's protection, and they have rights to public support. Allah says:

- *"We took the covenant from the Children of Israel, [enjoining upon them], 'Do not worship except Allah; and to parents do good and to relatives, orphans, and the needy'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:83).*

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (23854), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (103), Al-Bazzar (2115), Al-Tabarani (20/256), Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (corrected; 76), Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (8/308).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (8855, 7878, 16378) and Al-Bukhari on manners (6016).

(3) Narrated by Muslim on faith (46), Al-Bukhari (6016), and Ahmed (7878).

(4) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (112), Abu Ya'la (2699), Al-Tabarani (12/154), Al-Hakim (4/167), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 149).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on manners (6014, 3015) and Muslim on kinship relations (2624, 2625).

(6) Narrated by Ibn Hibban on marriage (4032), Al-Bayhaqi in *Al-Shu'ab* (9556), and Al-Albani in *Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 282).

- *"What Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the towns is for Allah and for the Messenger and for [his] near relatives and orphans and the [stranded] traveler - so that it will not be a perpetual distribution among the rich among you. And whatever the Messenger has given you - take it; and what he has forbidden you - refrain from it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is severe in penalty" (Holy Qur'an, 59:7).*
- *"Do not oppress the orphans" (Holy Qur'an, 93:9).*
- *"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? That is the one who drives away orphans" (Holy Qur'an, 107:1-2).*
- *"Do not approach the orphan's property except in the way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 6:152).*
- *"And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best until he reaches maturity" (Holy Qur'an, 6:152).*
- *"Indeed, those who unjustly devour the property of orphans are only consuming fire into their bellies. And they will be burned in a Blaze" (Holy Qur'an, 4:10).*

Most of the verses that protect the orphans were revealed in Mecca at the very beginning of Islam, suggesting that the orphans' rights are of the highest importance. These verses also state that abusing orphans is a sign of disbelief in Allah, and such abuse is severely punished. In fact, the Holy Qur'an repeatedly states that the only permissible way to deal with an orphan's property is to protect it and invest it properly. Taking care of orphans is a moral act of the noblest kind. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "I will be in Paradise with whoever takes care of an orphan, and we will be like this. [He raised his forefinger and the middle finger together by way of illustration]."⁽¹⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also said: "I will be the first at the gates of Heaven when they open, but a woman will come to enter first. I will ask her: 'Who are you?' She will say: 'I am a woman who took care of her orphans'."⁽²⁾

Feeding The Poor

Feeding the poor and encouraging others to do the same is a social moral value that is unique to Islam. We do not know of any other religion or moral system that incorporates this moral value. First of all, food is one of the most important needs that are necessary for survival. Even the prophets had to eat. Allah says: "We did not make the prophets in human forms that did not eat, nor were they immortal" (Holy

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6005), Abu Dawud (5150), and Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (1918).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Abu Ya'la (6651) and Al-Haythami in *Majma' Al-Zawā'id* (13519).

Qur'an, 21:8); and "The messengers whom We sent before you [Oh Mohammed] were all but men who ate food and walked through the markets" (Holy Qur'an, 25:20). Access to food is not only a necessity, but it is also a basic human right. Thus, the Holy Qur'an emphasizes our moral duty to offer food and to encourage others to do the same: "Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan - And does not encourage the feeding of the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 107:1-3). In fact, only a heartless unbeliever with no conscience would abuse orphans and refuse to encourage people to feed those in need. The Holy Qur'an mentions both immoral acts when describing Pre-Islamic Arabian communities in: "No! But you do not honor the orphan, and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. You consume inheritance, devouring [it], and your love for wealth is insatiable" (Holy Qur'an, 89:17-20). These pre-Islamic communities were like jungles where nobody would acknowledge the rights of the poor or the weak. Each individual only thought of his own survival, power, and wealth.

Those who do not support feeding the poor will be punished severely in the afterlife. When it is time for their punishment, they will say: "Oh, I wish I had not been given my record and had not known what my account would be like" (Holy Qur'an, 69:25-26). Then, Allah would order: "Seize him and shackle him. Then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is 70 cubits insert him." Indeed, he did not believe in Allah, the Most Great, nor did he encourage feeding the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 69:30-34). Therefore, it is every Muslim's religious duty to help feed the poor and to encourage others to participate in this righteous act.

Fraternity

Fraternity is a social moral value that means much more than equality. Fraternity means that people live within society as a family whose members support each other and live together in peace and harmony. Given the importance of this moral value and the critical role it plays within the structure of Islamic societies, we will discuss it in some detail.

The Holy Qur'an describes fraternity both as one of the greatest blessings and as an inseparable component of faith. Allah says:

- *"The believers are but brothers" (Holy Qur'an, 49:10).*
- *"Remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers" (Holy Qur'an, 3:103).*
- *"It is He who supported you [Oh Mohammed] with His help and with the believers and brought their hearts together. If you had spent all [the wealth] on*

earth, you could not have brought their hearts together; but Allah brought them together. Indeed, He is Exalted in Might and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 8:62-63).

There are many hadiths that emphasize the value of fraternity, including the following:

- *The Prophet (PUBH) says: "A Muslim to a Muslim is a brother to a brother; he neither wrongs him nor does he betray him."*⁽¹⁾
- *The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Do not envy, hate, or fight each other, but be servants of Allah and brothers."*⁽²⁾
- *Imam Ahmed narrates via Zaid Ibn Arqam that the Prophet (PBUH) supplicated after each prayer saying: "Oh Allah, you are our Allah and the Allah of everything. I testify that you alone are Allah and that you have no partner. Oh Allah, our Allah and the Allah of everything, I testify that all Your servants are brothers."*⁽³⁾

The third hadith above mentions fraternity as second only to the statement of faith, which is the cornerstone of Islam. The sentence "All Your servants are brothers" can be interpreted in two ways. It can mean that they are all related because they are all descendants of Adam, and they are all servants of Allah. Allah describes several prophets as brothers of their peoples, even if they do not believe. For example, Allah says: "To the [the people] of `Aad [We sent] their brother Hud" (Holy Qur'an, 7:65); "To [the people of] Thamud [We sent] their brother Salih" (Holy Qur'an, 7:73); and "To [the people of] Madyan [We sent] their brother Shu'ayb" (Holy Qur'an, 7:85). The other possible interpretation is that Muslims, in particular, are all brothers and sisters. They share the same faith, the same scripture, the same prophet, and the same Shari'a. The two interpretations do not contradict each other, but they entail different types of rights and obligations.

Fraternity is based on mutual love, and the most basic form of love is to have no envy, grudges, or hatred. The Holy Qur'an considers hatred within society a form of divine punishment for those who do not believe in Allah or go astray. Allah says: "And from those who say, 'We are Christians' We took their covenant; but they forgot a portion of what they were reminded of. Thus, We caused among them animosity and hatred until the Day of Resurrection. And Allah is going to inform them about what they used to do" (Holy Qur'an, 5:14). The Holy Qur'an also teaches us that the reason alcohol and gambling are forbidden is that they stir hatred and

(1) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari on grievances (2442) and Muslim on kinship relations (2580).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on manners (6066) and Muslim on kinship relations (2563).

(3) Narrated by Ahmed (weak; 19293), Abu Dawud on prayers (1508), Al-Tabarani (5/210), and Al-Albani in *Da'if Abi Dawud* (325).

animosity: “Satan only wants to cause between you animosity and hatred through intoxicants and gambling and to avert you from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you not desist?” (Holy Qur’an, 5:91). The Prophet (PBUH) describes negative emotions, such as hatred and animosity, as “the diseases of the nations” that threaten the very fabric of society. The Prophet (PBUH) says:

- *“The diseases of the nations before you, envy and hatred, are creeping toward you. They are like a razor that cuts through religion.”⁽¹⁾*
- *“Do you know what act of worship is higher in status than praying, fasting, and giving to charity? Reconciling between people. Animosity and envy are the razors that cut into religion.”⁽²⁾*
- *“The gates to heaven open on Mondays and Thursdays. Every servant who does not worship anything but Allah is forgiven, except those who have enmity toward their brothers. It is said: ‘Leave those two until they reconcile.’”⁽³⁾*
- *“It is not permissible for a Muslim to desert his brother for more than three days. Let them meet, express their feelings, and the better one shall initiate reconciliation.”⁽⁴⁾*
- *“Three people never have their prayers rise beyond their heads: a man who leads people in prayers even though they do not accept him; a woman who goes to bed while her husband is mad with her; and two brothers who refuse to talk to each other.”⁽⁵⁾*

Hatred and envy create a negative atmosphere that promotes more evil, such as spying, gossip, lies, and curses, all of which lead to even more conflict and internal fighting. This is exactly what the Prophet (PBUH) warned against when he said: “Do not revert after me to disbelievers who cut each other’s throats.”⁽⁶⁾ He also said: “For a Muslim to insult a Muslim is a sin, and to fight him is disbelieving.”⁽⁷⁾

(1) Narrated via Al-Zubair Ibn Al-`Awwam by Ahmed (weak; 1412), Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of the Day of Judgment (2510), Ibn Abd Al-Bar in *Jāmi` Bayān Al-`Ilm* (2122), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (3/31).

(2) Narrated via Abu Al-Darada by Ahmed (27508), Abu Dawud on manners (4919), Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of the Day of Judgment (2509), Al-Albani in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* (414), and Ibn Hibban on reconciliation (5092).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on kinship relations (2565), Ahmed (7639), Abu Dawud on manners (4916), and Al-Tirmidhi on kinship relations (2023).

(4) Narrated via Abu Ayyub by Al-Bukhari on seeking permissions (6237) and Muslim on kinship relations (2560).

(5) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ibn Majah on prayers (971), Al-Busayri in *Miṣbāḥ Al-Zujājāh* (1/119), Ibn Hibban on prayers (1757), Al-Tabarani (11/119), and Al-Albani in *Ḍa`īf Ibn Mājah* (206).

(6) Narrated via Jarir Ibn Abdullah by Al-Bukhari on knowledge (121) and Muslim on faith (65).

(7) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Al-Bukhari (48), Muslim (64), and both on faith.

Helping People Reconcile

The importance of social harmony and peace necessitates the social moral value of helping others reconcile their differences. Thus, reconciliation is mentioned in many verses in the Holy Qur'an that describe it as a major act of worship. Allah says:

- *"The believers are but brothers; thus, help your brothers reconcile, and fear Allah that you may receive mercy" (Holy Qur'an, 49:10).*
- *"Fear Allah and make amends between you and obey Allah and His Messenger, if you should be believers" (Holy Qur'an, 8:1).*
- *"Much of their private conversation is not good, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or reconcile between people. Whoever does that seeking the approval of Allah then We will give them a great reward" (Holy Qur'an, 4:114).*

Social peace and harmony play such an important role in Islamic jurisprudence that those who help others make peace are entitled to a share in *Zakat* funds. These funds would be used to pay off people's debts, restitutions, and compensations on behalf of those who cannot afford it for the purpose of maintaining social peace. The Prophet (PBUH) makes an exception for peace-makers if they exaggerate while trying to settle conflicts. He says: "He who uses praise or exaggeration to help others make peace is not a liar."⁽¹⁾

Thus, the bare minimum of fraternity is to stay away from social conflict and help make peace. The next level of fraternity is what the Prophet (PBUH) describes in his hadith: "None of you is considered a believer unless he wishes for his brother to have whatever he himself likes to have."⁽²⁾ In another version, he says: "I swear to Allah, no servant is considered faithful unless he wishes for his brother whatever he likes for himself."⁽³⁾ This hadith is self-explanatory: If a Muslim wishes to have a comfortable life, a happy marriage, and successful children, he should wish the same for others. By the same token, if one does not like something to happen to him, he should not wish it for others.

The higher level of fraternity is self-denial, which involves people wishing for others better than they would like for themselves. This is when one would rather go hungry if it means others would eat, and when one would sacrifice himself

(1) Narrated via Umm Kalthoum Bint Uqbah by Al-Bukhari on peace (2692) and Muslim on kinship relations (2605).

(2) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari (13) and Muslim (45), both on faith.

(3) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Ahmed (13629) and Al-Nassa'i on faith (5017).

for others to live. This moral value is illustrated in the verse: “Those who were settled in Medina and [adopted] the faith first love those who emigrated to them and find not any want in their chests of what the emigrants were given, but give [them] preference over themselves, even though they are themselves in need. And whoever is protected from the selfishness of his soul - it is those who will be the successful” (Holy Qur’an, 59:9). The Sunnah gives numerous examples of self-denial. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) made Saad Ibn Abi Al-Rabia and Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Awf brothers. Saad Ibn Abi Al-Rabia offered his emigrant brother half of his money and one of his two houses. He even offered to divorce one of his two wives so that his brother could marry her. Ibn Awf said: “May Allah bless you and your family. But I am a merchant. Please, show me the way to the market.”⁽¹⁾ This was the society established by the Prophet (PBUH), and this is the kind of ethics that was the norm.

For social peace and harmony to be established and maintained, fraternity has to be based on equality regardless of race, social class, ethnicity, language, or any other differences. This form of social justice requires leaders to realize that their duty is to serve the people, not to control them. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “The best of your leaders are the ones you love and they love you back, and the ones you pray for and they pray for you.”⁽²⁾

It is important to keep in mind that Islamic ethics is not a theoretical ideal that is meant to be a dream people aspire to realize some day. It is meant to be reality. This is why there are many practical moral directives that Muslims are required to follow. For example, Muslims are required to greet each other whenever they meet or run into each other. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “I swear to Allah, you will not enter heaven unless you believe, and you will not believe unless you love each other. Do you know what would make you love each other? Spread peace among you [by greeting each other].”⁽³⁾ Muslims are also required to express their condolences when someone passes away, to visit the sick, and to say “Bless you” when someone sneezes. They are also encouraged to exchange gifts on holidays following the hadith: “Exchange gifts so that you may love each other.”⁽⁴⁾ These social patterns are not about etiquette or cultural traditions, but religious duties that promote peace and harmony within society.

At the same time, Islam forbids all acts that lead to severing social ties and stirring up hatred among people. Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, let not

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari on business transactions (2049).

(2) Narrated via Awf Ibn Malik by Muslim on leadership (1855) and Ahmed (23981).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on faith (54), Ahmed (9709), and Abu Dawud on manners (5193).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (594), Abu Ya`la (6148), Ibn Hajar in *Bulūgh Al-Marām* (942), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (463).

a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them. And do not insult one another and do not call each other by [offensive] nicknames. Wretched is the name of disobedience after [one's] faith. And whoever does not repent - then it is those who are the wrongdoers. Oh you who have believed, avoid much [negative] assumption. Indeed, some assumption is sin. And do not spy on, or backbite against, each other. Would one of you like to eat the flesh of his brother when dead? You would detest it. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Accepting of repentance and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 49:11-12).

Fraternity means unity, as the Muslim society is united in faith, rituals, world view, moral ideals, traditions, and Shari'a. The Muslim society is based on a shared goal that connects this world with the afterlife, a shared moral system that balances idealism with realism, and shared sources for jurisprudence and creed. This is a society that believes in one Allah, follows one prophet, and forms one Ummah, following Allah's words: "You will not find a people who believe in Allah and the Last Day having affection for those who oppose Allah and His Messenger, even if they were their fathers or their sons or their brothers or their tribes" (Holy Qur'an, 58:22).

The Holy Qur'an repeatedly warns us against the efforts of those who try to divide the Muslim community. Allah says:

- *"Oh you who have believed, if you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, [to being] unbelievers. And how could you disbelieve while to you are being recited the verses of Allah and among you is His Messenger? And whoever holds firmly to Allah has [indeed] been guided to a straight path. Oh you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims [in submission to Him]. And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together and do not become divided. And remember the favor of Allah upon you - when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favor, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does Allah make clear to you His verses that you may be guided" (Holy Qur'an, 3:100-103).*
- *"Do not be like those who became divided and differed after clear proofs had come to them. And those will have a great punishment" (Holy Qur'an, 3:105).*
- *"Let there be among you a community inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 3:104).*
- *"This is My path, which is straight. Follow it; and do not follow [the other] ways, for you will be separated from His path. This has He instructed you that you may become righteous" (Holy Qur'an, 6:153).*

This unity, however, does not mean conformity. It allows for diversity that results from having different environments and cultures. It is diversity within unity, just like the diversity of fruit and flowers within the same garden, as in: “Within the land are neighboring plots and gardens of grapevines and crops and palm trees, [growing] several from a root or otherwise, watered with one water” (Holy Qur’an, 13:4). More importantly, this unity guarantees the freedom of intellectual pursuit within the established frameworks and resources. Every scholar has the right to investigate, even if they do not agree with each other. Scholars are rewarded for their work even if they make mistakes, and differences in views should not lead to disunity. We have seen how the Prophet’s (PBUH) companions had different views on many issues, but their differences did not lead to dissent and discord.

Islamic fraternity means that people should support and help each other. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A believer to another is like a building whose different parts reinforce each other.”⁽¹⁾ Society is like a building made up of many bricks, each supporting another. A brick by itself does not build a house, and thousands of bricks do not make a house, unless they are used together according to a well-established system. Otherwise, the structure would collapse. The Prophet (PBUH) also says: “The believers in their mutual kindness, compassion, and sympathy are like one body. If one part suffers, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fever”⁽²⁾; and “Muslims’ blood is all the same. The nearest and the farthest among them protect the rest. They are like one hand against all enemies. Those who have quick mounts should return to support those who have slow mounts, and those who got out along with detachments (should return) to support those who are stationed.”⁽³⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) once said: “Support your brother whether he has done an injustice or someone has done an injustice to him.” The companions said: “We support him if someone has been unjust to him, but how can we help him if he is unjust?” He said: “You stop him from doing injustice. That is support to him.”⁽⁴⁾

The Holy Qur’an commands us to co-operate to achieve and maintain social peace and harmony. This co-operation is required only for good causes. Allah says:

- *“And co-operate in righteousness and piety, but do not co-operate in sin and aggression” (Holy Qur’an, 5:2).*

(1) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari by Al-Bukhari on prayers (481) and Muslim on kinship relations (2585).

(2) Narrated via Al-Nu`man Ibn Bashir by Al-Bukhari (6011) and Muslim (2586).

(3) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Ahmed (6797), Abu Dawud on jihad (2751), Ibn Al-Jarud in *Al-Muntaqā* (1073), and Al-Albani in *Irwā’ Al-Ghalīl* (2208).

(4) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari on the use of force (6952), Ahmed (13079), and Al-Tirmidhi on social strife (2255).

- *"The believing men and believing women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong" (Holy Qur'an, 9:71).*
- *"The hypocrite men and hypocrite women are of one another. They enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right and close their hands [from giving to charity]" (Holy Qur'an, 9:67).*
- *"Those with him [the Prophet] are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves" (Holy Qur'an, 48:29).*
- *"Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His cause to be in a line as though they are a [single] structure joined firmly" (Holy Qur'an, 61:4).*

The Holy Qur'an gives us many examples of co-operation in Allah's cause, such as the co-operation between Moses and his brother Aaron. Moses said: "And appoint for me a minister from my family - Aaron, my brother. Increase my strength through him and let him share my task, so that we may exalt You much and remember You much. Indeed, You are of us ever Seeing" (Holy Qur'an, 20:29-35). Allah responded to his request: "We will strengthen your arm through your brother and grant you both supremacy" (Holy Qur'an, 28:35). The Holy Qur'an also tells us the story of the collaborative effort led by Dhu Al-Qarnayn to build a dam to keep Gog and Magog away from people. Allah says: "They said: 'Oh Dhu Al-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are indeed [great] corrupters in the land. May we assign for you an expenditure that you might build a barrier between us and them?' He said: 'That in which my Lord has established me is better [than what you offer], but assist me with strength; I will build a dam between you and them. Bring me sheets of iron' - until, when he had leveled [them] between the two mountain walls, he said: 'Blow [with bellows]' until when he had made it [like] fire, he said: 'Bring it to me, that I may pour over it molten copper'. Gog and Magog were not able to pass over it, nor were they able to penetrate it" (Holy Qur'an, 18:94-97).

The collaboration that maintains fraternity is emotional, financial, economic, political, military, and cultural. It starts within the family through the Islamic system of social welfare, where the rich are required to financially support the poor according to the detailed obligations listed in the Shari'a. Allah says: "Those of [blood] relationships are more entitled [to inheritance] in the decree of Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 9:75). The domain of social welfare extends to the local community as detailed in Muslims' obligations to their neighbors. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "He who goes to bed while [knowing that] his neighbor is hungry is not faithful."⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (112), Abu Ya'la (2699), Al-Tabarani (12/154), Al-Hakim (4/167), and Al-Albani in *Al-Shaḥīḥa* (corrected; 149).

He also says: "Allah and his Prophet have nothing to do with a neighborhood where someone goes to bed hungry."⁽¹⁾

Zakat is another way of reinforcing fraternity. The Prophet (PBUH) has ordered that *Zakat* be collected and distributed among the poor within the same province. This is in stark contrast to preceding cultures where taxes were collected from farmers in rural areas and spent on the capital or the king's palaces. From the very beginning of Islam, when Muslims were a small persecuted minority, giving to *Zakat* has been one of the main foundations of faith. There are numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an that command all those who can afford to support others to do so. Allah says:

- *"But he has not broken through the difficult pass. And how would you know about that difficult pass? It is the freeing of a slave or feeding an orphan relative or a needy person on a day of severe hunger, and being among those who believe and advise one another to be patient and compassionate" (Holy Qur'an, 90:11-17).*
- *"Every soul, for what it has earned, will be retained except for the companions of the right. They will be in gardens, wondering about the criminals and asking them "What put you into Hell?" They will say: "We were not among those who prayed, nor did we feed the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 74:38-44).*

Of course, feeding the poor is a figure of speech describing all types of needs. It does not make sense to feed those in need and leave them homeless and sick. Besides, helping those in need is not sufficient to fulfill our duties, as we are required to encourage others to do the same. Helping those in need is not just an optional act of kindness, but a mandate. Allah says:

- *"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan - And does not encourage the feeding of the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 107:1-3).*
- *"Seize him and shackle him. Then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is 70 cubits insert him." Indeed, he did not believe in Allah, the Most Great, nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 69:30-34).*
- *"And from their properties was [given] the right of the petitioner and the deprived" (Holy Qur'an, 51:19).*
- *"And those within whose wealth is a known right - For the petitioner and the deprived" (Holy Qur'an, 70:24-25).*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Amr by Ahmed (weak; 4880), Abu Ya`la (5746), and Al-Hakim (2/11).

- *"Eat of [each of] its fruit when it yields and give its due [Zakat] on the day of its harvest" (Holy Qur'an, 6:141).*

The verses that mandate the rights of those who are poor or disadvantaged were revealed very early in the history of Islam. The verses that provide the details that regulate these rights and the rules that govern the distribution of public funds were revealed later. There is a substantial body of literature on Islamic jurisprudence regarding social welfare, but these are only one form of fraternity.⁽¹⁾

Finally, the Islamic concept of fraternity does not recognize social classes based on wealth, power, nobility, or other social variables. In Islam, the rulers and the masses are brothers and sisters. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "The best of your leaders are the ones you love and they love you back, and the ones you pray for and they pray for you."⁽²⁾ Even in early Islam when slavery still existed, masters and slaves were considered brothers. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Those who serve you are your brothers whom Allah has put in your power. If you have a brother in your power, feed him from your food, give him from your clothes, and do not give him more work than he can handle. If you assign him a task, help him."⁽³⁾

Of course, there are wealthy individuals in Islam, but they do not form a social class that is treated differently, and they do not necessarily keep their wealth within the family. Islam allows social mobility, both upward and downward. Islam does not recognize a clergy social class either, as the children of scholars and religious figures do not inherit their parents' positions. In Islam, there are scholars, not clergymen, and they are recognized as scholars only for their studies and degrees. Scholars in Islam have no power over people. Their role is only to remind and teach people as did the Prophet (PBUH). Allah says:

- *"Remind, [Oh Mohammed]; you are only a reminder. You are not a controller over them" (Holy Qur'an, 88:21-22).*
- *"You are not a tyrant over them. But remind with the Holy Qur'an whoever fears My threat" (Holy Qur'an, 50:45).*

4.3.3 The Ethics Of The Ummah

The Ummah is the world community of Muslims. It crosses natural and political borders, and it includes all the faithful all over the world, regardless of their nationalities or ethnicities. Islam focuses on the well-being of the Ummah in the same

(1) For more details, see *Ishtirākiyyat Al-Islām* (Islamic Socialism) by Mustafa Al-Siba'i, 112-116.

(2) Narrated via A'waf Ibn Malik by Muslim on leadership (1855) and Ahmed (23981).

(3) Narrated via Abu Dhar by Al-Bukhari (30) and Muslim (1661), both on faith.

way it focuses on the well-being of the individual. After all, the Ummah is nothing but a large group of individuals. This community is like a building whose strength depends on the strength of its individual bricks. This building also requires a roof, which keeps it together and protects it. This roof is the nation state. Thus, every society needs a state that enforces its laws and protects its members and their faith. Many Muslims in modern times have found themselves in a difficult position because they live in societies that do not abide by the Shari'a, or in many cases, societies that see the Shari'a as an enemy. This conflict between one's beliefs and society results in a lot of anxiety and confusion because of social pressures, laws, and traditions that go against one's faith and moral values.

Islam sees the faithful as members of one community, hence all directives in the Holy Qur'an address "Oh you who have believed," with "you" always in the plural. There is not a single verse that addresses the faithful individual. This is because the requirements of Islamic life demand collaboration and interaction as well as the social moral guidelines that regulate them. For example, prayers cannot be established in the way described in the Holy Qur'an without a community, a mosque, an Imam, a preacher, and a teacher. No one individual can play all roles. Only a community can collaborate to fulfill the requirements of prayers. Thus the first priority of the Muslim Ummah is to establish prayers following the verse: "[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give *Zakat*" (Holy Qur'an, 22:41).

By the same token, fasting requires the involvement of the whole community, even though it is an individual act of worship. A community is needed to manage life in Ramadan and to make arrangements that help people fulfill their religious duties. In the case of *Zakat*, the community is fundamental, because it is the state that regulates the distribution of funds to those who need it following Allah's directive: "Take, [Oh, Mohammed], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase" (Holy Qur'an, 9:103). The pilgrimage also requires collaborative efforts, such as providing and securing transportation to Mecca, managing and providing services to the large numbers of people who arrive in Mecca, and regulating access to the sites where the pilgrimage rituals are performed. In fact, thousands of people are heavily involved in the process of managing and facilitating the pilgrimage. In summary, Islamic ethics cannot exist without a community in which its moral directives are applied.

The Muslim society is quite distinct from other communities because of its unique structure and world view. It is a society that is balanced, moral, humanistic, and devout. Muslims are required to establish such a society because it is necessary for them to live a true Islamic life. This Muslim society is not what some might imagine as a society where Islamic Shari'a is the law, particularly the legal penalties mentioned in the Holy Qur'an. This is a very limited and unfair view of

the Muslim society because it reduces the entire society to a limited part of its legal system.

In this section, I will shed some light on the basic features of the Islamic society we look forward to. Several political movements and groups have emerged in different Arab and Muslim countries with the objective of establishing this society. This new society will replace our current societies, where Islam has been mixed with western ideas, whether capitalist or socialist, and with old traditions from times when Muslims misunderstood their religion. This society will obliterate racial, ethnic, and geographic divides. It will be a society that belongs only to Allah, the Holy Qur'an, and the Prophet (PBUH), a unified society that shares the same creed, morals, laws, and leadership.

We often hear the term "Muslim societies" but this is a misnomer. There can be only one Muslim society, one Ummah. The Holy Qur'an always addresses the faithful as one community, as in "Indeed this, your Ummah, one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so worship Me" (Holy Qur'an, 21:92), and "Indeed this, your Ummah, one Ummah, and I am your Lord, so fear Me" (Holy Qur'an, 23:52). In both verses, the Holy Qur'an refers to a single community that is based on worshipping and revering Allah, which is possible only if there is a unified community. Some might wonder whether it is possible to have one nation for all the world's Muslims who exceed 1.6 billion people. It is quite possible; China is one nation even though its population is over 1.3 billion.

The main distinctive feature of the Ummah is that it is a Allah-made nation, a community that Allah has created to be a role model for the rest of the world. Allah says: "We have made you a just community that you will be witnesses over the people, and the Messenger will be a witness over you" (Holy Qur'an, 2:143). This nation is balanced in its approach to legislation, ethics, and world view. It is not a right-wing or left-wing nation, but the "middle-ground nation". It is a nation that rejects all forms of extremism and maintains a balance, following Allah's command in: "The heaven He raised and imposed the balance that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance" (Holy Qur'an, 55:7-9). The Ummah is a role model in the sense that its role is to help and enlighten others. Allah says: "You are the best nation produced [as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 3:110). Allah has produced this nation to benefit all others and to live by His word: "Let there be among you a community inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful" (Holy Qur'an, 3:104).

4.3.4 The Ethics Of The State

The desired Muslim society and state are based on a series of moral values that all members believe in. These moral values are part and parcel of the Islamic Shari'a. In other words, these moral values are Allah's commandments. These moral values include human rights and dignity, freedom, and the right to have one's body, honor, and mind protected by virtue of being a human being and a member of society. The discussions below will focus on six fundamental moral values: knowledge, work, freedom, democracy, honesty, and justice.

Knowledge

Knowledge is an essential moral ideal, which serves as the foundation of religious, moral, and material life in Islam. Knowledge is the path to faith and the motive that drives people to work. Knowledge is what distinguishes us from all other species and beings, even the angels who wished to be Allah's successors on earth: "And [mention, Oh Mohammed], when your Lord said to the angels: 'Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority'. They said: 'Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?' Allah said: 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know' And He taught Adam all the names. Then He showed them to the angels and said: 'Inform Me of their names if you are truthful'. They said: 'Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise'" (Holy Qur'an, 2:30-33).

Islam is a religion of science, and the Holy Qur'an is a book of knowledge. The first words of the Holy Qur'an to be revealed were: "Read in the name of your Lord Who created man from a clinging substance. Read, by your Lord, the most Generous, Who taught man with the pen that which he knew not" (Holy Qur'an, 96:1-5). Indeed, reading is the key to knowledge. The Holy Qur'an repeatedly emphasizes the value of knowledge and even assigns scholars a special status, because studying the creation draws us closer to the Creator. Allah says:

- *"[This Holy Qur'an is] a Book whose verses have been detailed, an Arabic holy Qur'an for a people who know" (Holy Qur'an, 41:3).*
- *"The Holy Qur'an is distinct verses [preserved] within the hearts of those who have been given knowledge" (Holy Qur'an, 29:49).*
- *"Say, 'Are those who know equal to those who do not know?'" (Holy Qur'an, 39:9).*
- *"Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge - [that He is] maintaining [creation] in justice" (Holy Qur'an, 3:18).*

- *"Only those who have knowledge among Allah's servants fear Him" (Holy Qur'an, 35:28).*

The Holy Qur'an encourages people to reject myths, cultural traditions, and blind faith. It also encourages people to think independently of leaders, forefathers, and the masses. It rejects all forms of conjecture and guesswork when it comes to the pursuit of the truth. Only facts and sound logic are admissible in this noble pursuit. The Holy Qur'an treats contemplation as a religious duty, thinking as an act of worship, the pursuit of the truth as a way to get closer to Allah, and the use of knowledge tools as an expression of gratitude to Allah. Below are some of the numerous verses that deal with knowledge:

- *"When they are told, 'Follow what Allah has revealed,' they say, 'Rather, we will follow what we found our fathers do,' even though their fathers understood nothing, and they were not guided?" (Holy Qur'an, 2:170).*
- *"They will say, 'Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way. Our Lord, give them double the punishment and curse them with a great curse'" (Holy Qur'an, 33:67-68). "He will say, 'For each is double, but you do not know.'" (Holy Qur'an 7:38).*
- *"They have no knowledge thereof. They only follow assumptions, and indeed, assumption avails not against the truth at all" (Holy Qur'an, 53:28).*
- *"They follow assumptions and what [their] souls desire" (Holy Qur'an, 53:23).*
- *"Do not follow [your own] desire, as it will lead you astray from the way of Allah" (Holy Qur'an, 38:26).*
- *"Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect that perhaps you would be grateful" (Holy Qur'an, 16:78).*
- *"Do not pursue what you have no knowledge of. Indeed, the hearing, the sight and the heart - [one] will be questioned about all those" (Holy Qur'an, 17:36).*
- *"Inform me with knowledge, if you should be truthful" (Holy Qur'an, 6:143).*
- *"Say, 'Do you have any knowledge that you can produce for us? You follow not except assumption, and you are not but falsifying'" (Holy Qur'an, 6:148).*

- “Bring me a scripture [revealed] before this or a [remaining] trace of knowledge, if you should be truthful” (Holy Qur’an, 46:4).
- “Say, ‘Produce your proof, if you should be truthful’” (Holy Qur’an, 2:111).
- “Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allah has created” (Holy Qur’an, 7:185).
- “Say, ‘Observe what is in the heavens and earth’” (Holy Qur’an, 10:101).
- “Say, ‘I only advise you of one [thing] - that you stand for Allah, [seeking truth] in pairs and individually, and then give thought’” (Holy Qur’an, 34:46).
- “Take warning, Oh people of vision” (Holy Qur’an, 59:2).

The Holy Qur’an quite often addresses “people of vision,” “people of intellect,” and “people of minds,” all of which refer to those who think, who are also referred to as “those who know” and “those who give thought.” Scholars of Islamic studies agree that the pursuit of knowledge is a requirement for all Muslims, as the Prophet (PBUH) says: “The pursuit of knowledge is the duty of every Muslim.”⁽¹⁾ This duty is fulfilled in two ways: a necessary duty and a sufficient duty. The necessary duty is that every Muslim needs to learn about religion (creed, practices, and acts of worship) in addition to basic life skills, such as literacy, in ways that satisfy one’s needs. The sufficient duty is having specialists who would, on behalf of the community, investigate all fields of sciences (physics, chemistry, mathematics, marine biology, and geology, etc.) to fulfill the needs of the community. However, if these sufficient duties are not fulfilled, the entire Ummah is to blame. The Islamic approach to knowledge, which does not see a conflict between religion and science, led to the rise of the Islamic civilization where many religious scholars were also scientists, such as Ibn Khaldoun, Avicenna, Al-Kawarizmi, Ibn Al-Nafis, and many others. Imam Mohamed Abdu, in this regard, highlighted that our Islamic foundations cope totally with knowledge and civil life unlike the foundations of Christianity. He proved it clearly in his valuable book *Al Islam Wa Al Nasraniya Ma’a Al Elim Wa Al Madaniya* (*Islam and Christianity agree with science and modernity*), where religious verses from Islam and Christianity were given to highlight the issue.

(1) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Ibn Majah in *Al-Muqaddima* (224), Abu Ya’la (2837), At-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* (9), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Mājah* (183).

Diligence

Islam views work as the fruit of knowledge, because knowledge is not an aesthetic value for pleasure only. Rather, knowledge has to have practical applications, hence the traditional saying: “Knowledge without work is like trees with no fruit, or clouds with no rain.” Work is also the outcome of true faith, hence the association between work and faith in many Qur’anic verses. While scholars disagree as to whether knowledge is part of faith, a condition for faith, or an outcome of faith, we can agree that true faith has to result in diligent work. The traditional saying goes: “Faith is what settles in the heart, and diligent work is a sign of true faith.”⁽¹⁾

Diligent work is a moral value that involves exerting honest efforts to achieve Allah’s objectives for settling mankind on earth. These objectives, as stated by Imam Al-Raghib Al-Asfahani in *Al-Dharī’a ilā Maqāṣid Al-Sharī’a* (*The Book of Means to the Noble Qualities of Sharia*), are:

1. To worship Allah: “And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me” (Holy Qur’an, 51:56).
2. To succeed Allah on earth: “Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority” (Holy Qur’an, 2:30).
3. To develop the earth: “He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it” (Holy Qur’an, 11:61).

These three objectives, or functions, are interconnected. Developing the earth with the intention to fulfill one’s duty toward Allah is an act of worship, whereas worship, broadly defined, involves succession and developing the earth. Work in this context means doing good deeds, which include all actions that aim to achieve and maintain the well-being of the individual and the community. These include all acts of worship, social interactions, and all forms of production. Moreover, all forms of economic productivity are acts that help fulfill our duties toward Allah, as long as this is our intention.

Allah explains in the Holy Qur’an why He has created the world: “that He might test you as to which of you is best in deed” (Holy Qur’an, 11:7; 67:2); and “that We may test them [as to] which of them is best in deed” (Holy Qur’an, 18:7). These verses explain that Allah does not accept just any work, but only the best. Therefore, the competition among people is not over who does good deeds and who does evil ones, but who does the best of good deeds. This is why we see this refrain repeated quite often in the Holy Qur’an:

(1) This saying, which is attributed to Al-Hassan Al-Basri, is narrated by Ibn Abi Shayba on faith and visions (30988) and Ahmed on asceticism (1483).

- *"Call [on The People of the Book] to the path of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 16:125).*
- *"Repel, by [means of] what is best, [their] evil. We are most knowing of what they describe" (Holy Qur'an, 23:96).*
- *"And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is best" (Holy Qur'an, 41:34).*
- *"And follow the best of what was revealed to you from your Lord" (Holy Qur'an, 39:55).*
- *"And do not approach the orphan's property except in a way that is best" (Holy Qur'an, 5:152; 17:34).*
- *"And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces [dissension] among them. Indeed Satan is ever, to mankind, a clear enemy" (Holy Qur'an, 17:53).*
- *"Give good tidings to My servants who listen to speech and follow the best of it" (Holy Qur'an, 39:18).*

The Prophet (PBUH) teaches us to do our best, even if it is manual labor, and to look forward to the best, not just what is good. He says, for example:

- *"When you ask Allah [for something], ask for Paradise, which is the best and highest place in heaven."⁽¹⁾*
- *"It is better for you to collect firewood, carry it on you back, and sell it hoping that Allah will save your face [from the Hellfire] than to beg people who may, or may not, give it to you."⁽²⁾*
- *"The best food you eat is what your hands earn. Allah's prophet David ate from what his hands earned."⁽³⁾*
- *"A Muslim is rewarded for every person, animal, or bird that eats from what he plants."⁽⁴⁾*
- *"If the Final Hour comes while you have a palm-cutting in your hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it."⁽⁵⁾*

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on jihad and biographies (2790), Ahmed (8419), and Al-Tirmidhi on descriptions of heaven (2530).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (1470) and Muslim (1042), both on *Zakat*.

(3) Narrated via Al-Miqdam Ibn Ma'id Ibn Yakrub by Al-Bukhari (2072) and Ibn Majah (2138), both on business transactions.

(4) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Bukhari on agriculture (2320), Muslim on using water (1553), Ahmed (13554), and Al-Tirmidhi on legal rulings (1382).

(5) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Ahmed (sound; 12981), Al-Bukhari in *Al-Adab Al-Mufrad* (479) and *Al-Ḍiyā' Al-Mukhtāra* (2715), and Al-Albani in *Al-Silsila Al-Ṣaḥīḥa* (corrected; 9).

This last hadith is quite interesting, for why would anyone plant a tree if nobody would ever benefit from it? The point here is that Muslims should work diligently because work is valued in its own right and because Muslims are required to be productive until the very last minute. Finally, if Muslims appreciate the value of work in Islam, then the gates of heaven will open for them, and they will be one of the most productive, sustainable, and powerful communities on earth.

Freedom

Freedom is one of the most cherished values in Islam, because it enables people to fulfil their ultimate duty in this world, namely serving Allah alone. Freedom in Islam is comprehensive, as it includes the freedom of religion, the freedom of intellectual pursuit, the freedom of speech, and all other forms of freedom.

In Islam, religious freedom is the freedom to believe as one chooses and to practice religion as one decides. Islam prohibits forced conversion, even if it is conversion to Islam. The Holy Qur'an is quite explicit in this regard. Allah says:

- *"Had your Lord willed, all those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, [Oh Mohammed], would you compel people to become believers?" (Holy Qur'an, 10:99).*
- *"There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong" (Holy Qur'an, 2:256).*

Moreover, non-Muslims in Muslim communities have their freedom of religion guaranteed and protected. They have the same rights and obligations as Muslims except in cases where religious differences determine otherwise. For example, non-Muslims are not required to comply with all Islamic rules, and they are not forbidden from all that Muslims are forbidden to do.

We see some contemporary scholars who claim that the modern concept of freedom was not known in Islamic history, and that the only form of freedom known in Islamic history is freedom from slavery. Some go as far as claiming that the Muslim world owes its understanding of freedom to the French Revolution. From a linguistic perspective, the Arabic word for freedom originally meant "not being a slave". However, the concept of freedom extends to mean freedom from all forms of oppression. Omar Ibn Al-Khattab used the Arabic word for freedom in his correspondences with Amr Ibn Al-'As when the latter was governor of Egypt. Omar wrote to him: "Why would you enslave people who were born free?"⁽¹⁾ Ali Ibn Abi Talib writes from his deathbed to his son: "Do not be a slave to anyone, for

(1) See *Futūḥ Miṣr* (The Conquest of Egypt) by Ibn Abd Al-Hakam (1/183) and *Ḥusn Al-Muḥāḍara* (The Best of Conversations) by Al-Suyuti (1/193).

Allah has made you a free man.”⁽¹⁾ We also see the concept of freedom in Classical Arabic poetry. Ibn Mufzi` writes:

*A slave listens only to the cane
But a word makes a free man abstain.*

Ibn Zaydun writes:

A free man gives like he takes.

Urwa Ibn Udhayna writes:

*Free women do nothing that raises suspicion,
Like the gazelles of Mecca, hunting them is forbidden.*

There are also many Arabic proverbs that mention freedom such as: “A free woman goes hungry, but not serve as a wet-nurse” and “Patience is bitter, but only a free man would endure it.”

These lines of poetry and proverbs demonstrate that the lack of a word that specifically means political or personal freedom does not mean these concepts do not exist in Islamic cultures. For example, the Arabic word for “equality” is not used in the canons of Islamic studies in the same way we use it now. However, the meaning of equality is quite evident in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah. As we have seen, all acts of worship, legal rulings, and moral principles make no distinction between people based on race or social class. We find the concept of freedom referred to as:

- **Dignity:** “We have certainly dignified the children of Adam” (Holy Qur’an, 17:70).
- **Honor:** “To Allah belongs [all] honor, and to His Messenger, and to the believers” (Holy Qur’an, 63:8).
- **Freedom from injustice:** “Do not oppress the orphans, and do not repel the petitioners” (Holy Qur’an, 93:9-10).
- **Freedom from terrorism:** “It is not permissible for a Muslim to terrorize a Muslim.”⁽²⁾
- **Freedom from unjust punishment and torture:** “He who exposes the back of a Muslim [to beat him] will meet Allah while Allah is angry.”⁽³⁾

(1) See *Adab Al-Dunyā wal-Dīn* (The Manners of Life and Religion) by Al-Mawardi (1/419).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed in his *Musnad* (23064), Abu Dawud on manners (5004), and Al-Albani in *Ghāyat Al-Marām* (corrected; 447).

(3) Narrated via Abu Omamah by Al-Tabarani in *Al-Kabīr* (8/116) and *Al-Awsaṭ* (2339), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhīb wal-Tarhīb* (3706), Al-Haythami in *Majma` Al-Zawā'id* (10521), and Al-Hafidh in *Al-Fath* (12/85).

In terms of political freedom and freedom from occupiers and tyrants, the Holy Qur'an calls on Muslims to wage war to liberate those who cannot protect themselves: "What is [the matter] with you that you fight not in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children who say, 'Our Lord, take us out of this city of oppressive people and appoint for us from Yourself a protector and appoint for us from Yourself a helper?'" (Holy Qur'an, 4:75). If people cannot fight against tyranny and oppression, they are required to immigrate so that they would protect their dignity and freedom. Muslims are not allowed to accept humiliation and enslavement. Allah says: "Indeed, those whom the angels take [in death] while wronging themselves - [the angels] will say, 'In what [condition] were you?' They will say, 'We were oppressed in the land'. The angels will say, 'Was not the earth of Allah spacious [enough] for you to emigrate therein?' For those, their refuge is Hell - and it is an evil destination, except for the oppressed among men, women, and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they directed to a way. For those it is expected that Allah will pardon them, and Allah is ever Pardoning and Forgiving" (Holy Qur'an, 4:97-99). These verses, however, apply only to Muslims who live in non-Muslim countries. Muslims who live in Muslim countries are required to hold on to the land and endure patiently, following the Abi Hanifa School.

Anyone who studies Islam realizes that monotheism is the essence of freedom and equality. In fact, the Islamic statement of faith, "There is no Allah but Allah", makes all people equal and free from tyranny and Allah-like tyrants. This is why the Prophet's (PBUH) letters to Christian kings and Caesars always ended with the verse: "Say, 'O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah'" (Holy Qur'an, 3:64). Nothing caused more destruction and enslavement than tyrants claiming to be Allah-like rulers. For people to gain and maintain their freedom, they have to destroy those false deities who are nothing but humans, just like everyone else. The main reason the Arab polytheists resisted the message of Islam is that they realized how it would change their social structure by granting all people the same rights and obligations.

Shura

While the concept of democracy is relatively new in human history, Islam has introduced it in the form of *Shūrā*. This term means that no individual should make decisions unilaterally when it is possible to consult with others, because a collective decision is always better than an individual one. Consulting each other allows all concerned parties to look at the issue under consideration from different perspectives, as each individual offers his/her view, knowledge, and experiences, as expressed in Bashār Ibn Burd's poetry:

When it is time to seek council,

Ask the wise and don't be doubtful.

A man seeking council is no eyesore.

For a wing needs every feather to soar.

Islam calls for shura in all aspects of life and at all levels (the individual, the family, and the nation state). Islam teaches us as individuals to seek council whenever we have to make important decisions instead of leaving ourselves to the push and pull of our personal desires and hesitation. In these cases, we should first ask Allah for guidance through an istikhāra prayer, which is a special prayer with a particular supplication.⁽¹⁾ Then, we should consult those we trust and have experiences regarding the issue under consideration, as the traditional saying goes: "He who seeks Allah's council never fails, and he who seeks wisdom never regrets."

There are many examples in the Sunnah where the Prophet's (PBUH) companions consult him on their private matters. For example, Fatima Bint Qays sought his opinion when Mu'awiya and Abu Jahm proposed to marry her. He told her: "Mu'awiya has no money whatsoever, and Abu Jahm is a wife beater."⁽²⁾ Then, he suggested that she married Osama Ibn Zaid instead of both. The Prophet (PBUH) also quite often sought the council of his companions, such as Ali Ibn Abi Talib and Osama Ibn Zaid.⁽³⁾

Married life in Islam is based on consultation and mutual agreement from the very beginning of marriage. For example, it is forbidden for a father to make decisions about his daughter's marriage without her consent. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "A widow is not to be married unless she explicitly states her consent, and a virgin is not to be married unless she gives her permission." Someone asked: "How can her permission be sought?" The Prophet (PBUH) said: "If she is too shy, she can say nothing."⁽⁴⁾ Khansaa Bint Khuzam narrates that her father married her off against her will. She went to the Prophet (PBUH) and he annulled her marriage.⁽⁵⁾ The Prophet (PBUH) also encourages fathers to consult their wives before agreeing to their daughter's marriage, as he says: "Consult women regarding their daughters."⁽⁶⁾

(1) See hadith narrated by Jabir Ibn Abdullah by Al-Bukhari on supplications (6382), Ahmed (14707), and Abu Dawud on the virtues of the Holy Qur'an (1538).

(2) Narrated via Fatima Bint Qays by Muslim on divorce (1480) and Ahmed (27333).

(3) See hadith on the Ifk incident narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on testimonies (2661) and Muslim on repentance (2770).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari (5136) and Muslim (1419), both on marriage.

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on forced marriages (6945) and Ahmed (26786).

(6) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Ahmed (4905) and Abu Dawud (2095).

Married life in Islam is based on mutual agreement and consultation. We see many examples of this in the Prophet's (PBUH) life. For example, when the revelations started, his first action was to consult his wife Khadija, who calmed him down and suggested that he went with her to her cousin Waraqa Ibn Nawfal.⁽¹⁾ We also saw how the Prophet (PBUH) consulted Umm Salama before agreeing to the Treaty of Hudaibiyyah. This type of consultation within the family is mandated in the Holy Qur'an. Allah says: "Mothers may breastfeed their children for two complete years if they wish to complete the nursing [period]. Upon the fathers are the mothers' provisions and their clothing according to what is acceptable. No person is charged with more than his capacity. No mother should be harmed through her child, and no father through his child. And upon the [father's] heir is [a duty] like that [of the father]. And if they both desire weaning through mutual consent from both of them and consultation, there is no blame upon either of them" (Holy Qur'an, 2:233).

Shura is fundamental at the state level. The Holy Qur'an makes it an essential component of Muslim society, a component that is inseparable from faith. Allah says: "What is with Allah is better and more lasting for those who have believed and upon their Lord they rely, who avoid the major sins and immoralities, and when they are angry, they forgive, and those who have responded to their lord and established prayer and whose affair is [determined by] consultation among themselves, and from what We have provided them, they spend" (Holy Qur'an, 42:36-38). This verse makes shura one of the criteria of faith, while other verses directly command it, as in "Consult them in the matter" (Holy Qur'an, 3:159). This command was revealed shortly after the Battle of Uhud, during which the Prophet (PBUH) changed his plans after consulting with his companions and the result was defeat and the death of 70 of his companions. Nevertheless, the Holy Qur'an ordered the Prophet (PBUH) to continue to consult with his companions.

The political and military history of early Islam is full of examples of the Prophet's (PBUH) consultation with his companions. He consulted them before, during, and after the battle of Badr. In fact, he only started the battle when his companions agreed. During the Battle of Uhud, he took their advice to go out with his army to meet the enemies outside Medina rather than wait for them to come. During the Battle of Al-Khandaq, he almost reached an agreement with the Tribe of Ghatfan, according to which Ghatfan would not fight on Quraysh's side in exchange of a share in Medina's crops. The Ansar rejected the terms of the agreement, and the Prophet (PBUH) took their view in consideration and refused to ratify the agreement. The Prophet (PBUH) also consulted Umm Salama during the Hudaibiyyah Treaty when his companions refused to take off their Ihram clothes because they

(1) See the hadith narrated via Aisha by Al-Bukhari on exegesis (4953) and Muslim on faith (9160).

were insistent on performing Umrah in Mecca. She suggested that he went to them without his Ihram clothes and to stay silent. When they saw him, they changed their mind and followed his example.

These examples demonstrate that Islam commands leaders to consult people, and it commands people to offer advice to their leaders. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Religion is giving advice." When asked to clarify, he said: "The advice is to obey Allah, His Prophet (PBUH), and the Holy Qur'an. Advice is to be given to the leaders of Muslims and to the Muslim community."⁽¹⁾ Moreover, the commandment to enjoin what is good and to prohibit evil is a requirement for leaders and masses alike. The same applies for the requirement of supporting others and encouraging them to be patient. In other words, Islam requires everyone to give advice and to ask for advice. Abu Hurayrah once went around town saying: "Whoever says, 'There is no Allah but Allah' goes to heaven." Omar heard him and feared people would only give lip service to the statement of faith. He stopped Abu Hurayrah and explained that the Prophet (PBUH) also said: "Let them translate it [the statement of faith] into actions."⁽²⁾

The Caliphs followed in the Prophet's (PBUH) footsteps regarding seeking council. In his first political speech, Abu Bakr stated his mandate: "If I do right, help me. If I do wrong, guide me. Obey me as long as I obey Allah in ruling. If I disobey Allah, you should not obey me."⁽³⁾ When Omar became Caliph, he gave a speech in which he said: "If any of you sees me doing something wrong, stop me." Someone said: "If we see you doing something wrong we will stop you with our swords." Omar responded: "Thank Allah who made some of Omar's people willing to stop his evil with the sword."⁽⁴⁾ Someone once told Omar when he was the Caliph: "Fear Allah!" One of Omar's companions rebuked the man for talking to the Caliph in such manner. Omar said: "Leave him alone. People are no good if they do not say it, and rulers are no good if they do not hear it."⁽⁵⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) allowed armed resistance against corrupt leaders on two conditions. The first is indisputable disbelief. He ordered patience with leaders "until you see proven indisputable disbelief".⁽⁶⁾ The second condition is that fighting against a ruler does not cause more harm, following the principle of "the lesser of two evils". When armed resistance is feared to cause greater evil than the ruler,

(1) Narrated via Tamim Al-Dari by Muslim on faith (55), Ahmed (16940), Abu Dawud on manners (4944), and Al-Nassa'i on allegiance (4197).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on faith (31).

(3) Narrated via Anas Ibn Malik by Al-Tabari in his *Tārīkh* (3/210), Ibn Kathir in *Al-Bidāya wal-Nihāya* (9/414).

(4) Narrated by Abu Shayba on asceticism (35629).

(5) Narrated by Abu Shayba in *Tārīkh Al-Madīna* (2/773).

(6) Narrated via Ubada Ibn Al-Samit by Al-Bukhari on social strife (7056) and Muslim on leadership (1709).

resistance should be political and peaceful. The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Every prophet before me had companions and apostles who followed in his footsteps. Then, there comes a generation of people who say what they do not do, and do what they are ordered not to do. He who fights those hypocrites with a sword is faithful. He who fights them with his tongue is faithful. He who fights them with his heart is faithful. Nobody else is considered faithful.”⁽¹⁾

The Holy Qur’an gives us examples of governance which is based on good council. “When the Queen of Sheba received King Solomon’s message, she asked her council: ‘Oh eminent ones, advise me in my affair. I would not decide a matter until you witness [for] me’. They said, ‘We are men of strength and of great military might, but the command is yours, so see what you will command’. She said, ‘Indeed kings - when they enter a city, they ruin it and render the honored of its people humbled. And thus do they do. But I will send them a gift and see with what [reply] the messengers will return’” (Holy Qur’an, 27:32-35). Her wise council helped her make a good decision that led her and her people to faith and saved them from inevitable defeat.

The Holy Qur’an also gives us an example of tyranny in the story of Pharaoh who said: “I am your most exalted lord” (Holy Qur’an, 79:24); and “I have not known you to have a Allah other than me” (Holy Qur’an, 28:38). Pharaoh only sought the council of his cronies, as he did when Moses called him to faith: “[Moses] said, ‘What if I bring you clear proof?’ [the Pharaoh] said, ‘Then bring it, if you should be truthful’. Moses threw his staff, and suddenly it became a serpent and he drew out his hand; thereupon it was white for the observers. Pharaoh said to the eminent ones around him, ‘Indeed, this is a learned magician. He wants to drive you out of your land by his magic. What do you advise?’” (Holy Qur’an, 26:30-35). This was not an honest attempt by Pharaoh to seek council, as he did not ask for advice about the truth of Moses’s faith. Rather, he only asked a select group of people who obeyed him and he presupposed that Moses wanted to drive people out of the land.

The Holy Qur’an tells us the truth about Pharaoh: “Pharaoh exalted himself in the land and divided its people into factions, oppressing a sector among them, slaughtering their [newborn] sons and keeping their females alive. Indeed, he was a corrupter” (Holy Qur’an, 28:4). Pharaoh’s tyranny is described in many verses, including: “Indeed, he [Pharaoh] was a haughty one among the transgressors” (Holy Qur’an, 33:31); “Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed” (Holy Qur’an, 79:17); and “[Have you seen what Allah did to them and] Pharaoh, owner of the stakes who oppressed within the lands and increased corruption therein? Your Lord poured a scourge of punishment upon them. Indeed, your Lord is in observation” (Holy Qur’an, 89:10-14).

(1) Narrated via Ibn Masoud by Muslim (50) and Abu `Awana (98), both on faith.

Pharaoh did not oppress the Israelites alone, but he also oppressed anyone who defied him or rejected his claim to divinity. When the magicians whom he brought to challenge Moses let him down and became themselves believers, Pharaoh punished them in the most horrendous ways: “[Pharaoh] said, ‘You believed him before I gave you permission. Indeed, he is your master who taught you magic. I will surely cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will crucify you on the trunks of palm trees, and you will surely know which of us is more severe in [giving] punishment and more enduring’” (Holy Qur’an, 20:71). He was such a tyrant that he thought he had power over people’s beliefs.

The Holy Qur’an denounces Pharaoh and those who supported him, including Qaroun who epitomizes capitalistic greed. Qaroun was one of Moses’s people, but he decided to align himself with Pharaoh. Qaroun was one of the wealthiest people on earth, but he was such an ingrate toward Allah that he claimed his wealth to be the result of his knowledge rather than a blessing from Allah: “He said, ‘I was only given it because of the knowledge I have’” (Holy Qur’an, 28:78). Another one of Pharaoh’s supporters is Haman, who was the perfect example of a corrupt politician. He was the mastermind behind Pharaoh’s schemes and turned himself into a tool in the hands of tyranny. Allah says: “Pharaoh and Haman and their soldiers were deliberate sinners” (Holy Qur’an, 28:8). Allah’s punishment for Pharaoh included all those who supported him: “We took him and his soldiers and threw them into the sea. See how was the end of the wrongdoers” (Holy Qur’an, 28:40).

The Holy Qur’an gives many examples of the consequences of tyranny and dictatorship. First, they are punished individually, as Allah says: “Thus does Allah seal over every heart [belonging to] an arrogant tyrant” (Holy Qur’an, 40:35); and “They requested victory from Allah, and disappointed, [therefore], was every obstinate tyrant” (Holy Qur’an, 14:15). This punishment extends to include not only all those who support tyranny, as we saw in the story of Moses, but also the people who surrender to tyrants and never resist. For example, many of the prophets were sent to people who submitted to tyrants:

- *“Noah said: ‘My Lord, indeed they have disobeyed me and followed him whose wealth and children will not increase him except in loss’” (Holy Qur’an, 71:21).*
- *“And that was ‘Aad [the people of Prophet Hud], who rejected the signs of their Lord and disobeyed His messengers and followed the order of every obstinate tyrant. They were [therefore] followed in this world with a curse and [as well] on the Day of Resurrection” (Holy Qur’an, 11:59-60).*
- *“He [Pharaoh] thought little of his people, and they obeyed him. Indeed, they were [themselves] a people defiantly disobedient [of Allah]” (Holy Qur’an, 43:54).*

The Holy Qur'an tells us how tyrants and their followers curse and blame each other on the Day of Judgment, and in the end they are all in hell:

- *"They will say, 'Our Lord, indeed we obeyed our masters and our dignitaries, and they led us astray from the [right] way. Our Lord, give them double the punishment and curse them with a great curse'" (Holy Qur'an, 33:67-68).*
- *"[When those who have been followed disassociate themselves from those who followed [them], and they [all] see the punishment, and cut off from them are the ties [of relationship], Those who followed will say, 'If only we had another chance [at worldly life], we would disassociate ourselves from them as they have disassociated themselves from us'. Thus will Allah show them their deeds as regrets upon them. And they are never to emerge from the Fire" (Holy Qur'an, 2:166-167).*

In summary, free choice is the foundation of political leadership in Islam. Only a leader who is chosen and accepted by the community should be obeyed. Such a ruler has the right and the obligation to receive advice and support from the community. Islam does not allow any individual to even lead prayers unless accepted by those who pray. The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Three people never have their prayers rise above their heads: a man who leads people in prayers even though they do not accept him; a woman who goes to bed while her husband is angry with her; and two brothers who refuse to talk to each other."⁽¹⁾ If this is the case with prayers, what about leading the whole community?

Trust

Trust is at the moral core of the nation state. Allah commands us to be trustworthy, because betrayal of all sorts is a major sin. Muslims are forbidden from betraying Allah, the Prophet (PBUH), and people. Stealing, accepting bribes, embezzlement, forgery, and swindling are all forms of betrayal. Anyone who is entrusted with something, whether it is the welfare of the family or a professional responsibility, has to fulfill his/her duty. Allah says:

- *"Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due" (Holy Qur'an, 4:58).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or knowingly betray your trusts" (Holy Qur'an, 8:27).*
- *"And they [the faithful] are those who are attentive to their trusts and their promises" (Holy Qur'an, 23:8).*

(1) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ibn Majah on prayers (971), Al-Busayri in *Miṣbāḥ Al-Zujājāh* (1/119), Ibn Hibban on prayers (1757), Al-Tabarani (11/119), and Al-Albani in *Ḍa'if Ibn Mājah* (206).

The prophets, who are our role models, are all described in the Holy Qur'an as "trustworthy", which is one of the four attributes of all prophets: truthfulness, trustworthiness, sound instinct, and the ability to deliver Allah's message. Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) was called "The Trustworthy" even before the revelations. For example, Noah said: "Indeed, I am to you a trustworthy messenger" (Holy Qur'an, 26:107). When Joseph was cleared of all wrongdoing, the King of Egypt told him: "You are today established [in position] and trusted" (Holy Qur'an, 12:54). Gabriel, the Angel of Revelations, is also described in the Holy Qur'an as trustworthy. Allah says: "Obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy" (Holy Qur'an, 81:21); and "The Trustworthy Spirit [Gabriel] has brought it [the Holy Qur'an] down" (Holy Qur'an, 26:193).

The Holy Qur'an condemns those who betray their trust and states that Allah does not love them and does not guide them. Allah says: "If you [have reason to] fear betrayal from people, throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms. Indeed, Allah does not like traitors" (Holy Qur'an, 8:58). In the story of Joseph, the wife of Egypt's king says: "That is so that the King will know that I did not betray him in [his] absence and that Allah does not guide the plan of betrayers" (Holy Qur'an, 12:52). "King Solomon asked his court: 'Oh assembly, which of you will bring me her [the Queen of Sheba's] throne before they come to me in submission?' A powerful jinn said: 'I will bring it to you before you rise from your place, and indeed, I am for this [task] strong and trustworthy'" (Holy Qur'an, 27:38-39).

The Sunnah includes many hadiths on trust, including the following:

Omran Ibn Husayn narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "The best among you are my contemporaries, then those who follow them, then those who will come after them. Then, they will be followed by people who will testify but will not be called upon to testify; they will betray the trust, and will not be trusted. They will make vows but will not fulfill them, and obesity will prevail among them."⁽¹⁾

Abdullah Ibn Amr Ibn Al-'As narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "There are four traits for a hypocrite. Whoever has one of them has one characteristic of hypocrisy unless he gives it up: Whenever he is entrusted, he betrays. Whenever he speaks, he tells lies. Whenever he makes a vow, he breaks it. Whenever he argues, he is obscene."⁽²⁾

Ibn Masoud narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "Fighting in Allah's cause wipes away all sins except for betrayal."⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on testimonies (2651) and Muslim on the Prophet's companions (2535).

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (34) and Muslim (58), both on faith.

(3) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Shu'ab Al-Iman* (4885).

Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) used to pray: “Oh Allah, I seek refuge in You from hunger, for it is a bad companion, and I seek refuge with You from betrayal, for it is an evil that hides in the hearts.”⁽¹⁾

Anas Ibn Malik narrates that whenever the Prophet (PBUH) gave a sermon he said: “Those who cannot be trusted have no faith, and those who betray have no religion.”⁽²⁾

Ibn Taymiya has an interesting treatise on two verses from the Holy Qur’an, which he calls “The Verses for the Princes”. He writes: “This is a brief treatise⁽³⁾ that expounds on some critical elements of divine and prophetic guidelines for governance that no leader or community can do without. I wrote it in response to a request by the ruler, to whom Allah has ordered us to offer sincere advice. The Prophet (PBUH) says: ‘Allah is pleased with three things from you: that you worship Him alone; that you take hold of His rope; and that you give good advice to the one whom Allah has given command over you.’”⁽⁴⁾

This treatise expounds on the following two verses: “Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is that which Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing. O you who have believed, obey Allah and obey the Messenger and those in authority among you. And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is the best [way] and best in result” (Holy Qur’an, 4:58-59).

Scholars of Qur’anic exegesis agree that the first verse concerns community leaders who are entrusted with governance and justice. Scholars also agree that the second verse concerns the masses, the armies, and everyone under the rule of the leader. All those people are commanded to obey those in charge regarding the distribution provisions, warfare, legal rulings, and other decisions. This obedience is not absolute or blind, for people are to obey their leaders only if the leaders obey Allah. If the leaders order anything that contradicts Allah’s rule, they should not be obeyed. If the people and their rulers disagree, they should follow the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah to settle their disputes. If the leaders do not follow the

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud on prayers (1547), Al-Nassa’i on seeking refuge (5468), Ibn Majah on food (3354), Al-Nawawi in *Riyāḍ Al-Ṣāliḥīn* (1485), Ibn Hajar in *Natā’ij Al-Afkār* (3/88), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Abī Dāwūd* (1383).

(2) Narrated by Ahmed (12383), Abu Ya`la (2863), and Al-Albani in *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Jāmi`* (3004).

(3) The treatise is entitled *Al-Siyāsa Al-Shar‘iyya* (Politics According to Sharia). See *Al-Fatāwā* (28/244). It is said that Ibn Taymiya wrote this treatise overnight in response to a request for an opinion on governance. I am not sure if anyone can write such a detailed treatise overnight. He probably had it drafted and memorized early on.

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Muslim on legal rulings (1715) *sans* “that you give good advice to the one whom Allah gives command over you,” and Ahmed (8799).

Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah, people are required to obey only in what complies with the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah. Allah says: "Co-operate in righteousness and piety, but do not co-operate in sin and aggression" (Holy Qur'an, 5:2). Those two verses are the foundations of just governance.

As for leadership, it is based on trust and power. The first verse above was revealed when the Prophet (PBUH) seized Mecca. He received the keys to the Ka'ba from the Bani Shayba clan, but Al-Abbas asked the Prophet (PBUH) for the keys so that he would be in charge of the Grand Mosque and the water supplies for the pilgrims. When the verse was revealed, the Prophet (PBUH) gave the keys back to Bani Shayba. The moral here is that the community leader has to assign tasks and positions to the most qualified person(s). The Prophet (PBUH) says: "Whoever assigns a task to someone, knowing that another is more qualified, has betrayed Allah and His Prophet."⁽¹⁾ In another version, the Prophet (PBUH) says: "Whoever puts a man in charge of a group of Muslims knowing that one of them is more qualified has betrayed Allah, His Prophet, and the faithful."⁽²⁾

Omar Ibn Al-Khattab says: "Whoever puts a man in charge of Muslim affairs because he favors him or because they are related, he has betrayed Allah, the Prophet (PBUH), and the Muslims."⁽³⁾ Accordingly, a ruler has to identify the most qualified individuals to serve, including governors, judges, military leaders of different ranks, scribes, administrators, and tax and alms collectors. Each of these is also required to identify and appoint the most qualified individuals to serve throughout the state system all the way down to imams, reciters, teachers, pilgrimage leaders, mail deliverers, policemen, guards, market chiefs, and village chiefs. Everyone who is charged with any of the affairs of Muslims has to be the most qualified individual for the task. No man is given a position or assigned a task because he asks for it. Rather, self-nomination to a position can be a reason for not entrusting the person who nominates himself. A group of men once went to the Prophet (PBUH) and asked to be appointed as community leaders, but he responded: "We do not give these positions to those who ask for them."⁽⁴⁾ It is also narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) told Abd Al-Rahman Ibn Samra: "Do not ask to be a governor. If you are appointed without asking, you will be aided [by Allah] on it, but if you ask for it, you only have your own resources."⁽⁵⁾ The Prophet (PBUH)

(1) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Ibn Abi 'Asim on the Sunnah (1462).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Hakim on legal rulings (4/92), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (weak; 3345), and Al-Albani in *Da'if Al-Targhib wal-Tarhib* (weak; 1339).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Abd Al-Raziq in *Jāmi' 'Omar* (20693).

(4) Narrated via Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari by Al-Bukhari on the repentance of apostates (6923) and Muslim on leadership (1733).

(5) Narrated by Al-Bukhari on legal rulings (7146) and Muslim on faith (1652).

also said: "He who asks to be a judge is left to his own resources, but he who does not ask to be a judge, Allah sends an angel to support him."⁽¹⁾

If an administrator assigns a position to someone who is not the most qualified because of personal ties (such as being relatives, friends, companions, or compatriots, etc.), a bribe, any personal interests, or hatred toward the most qualified person, he has betrayed Allah, his Prophet (PBUH), and the faithful. Thus, he has committed what Allah warns us against in "Oh you who have believed, do not betray Allah and the Messenger or knowingly betray your trusts. And know that your properties and your children are but a trial and that Allah has with Him a great reward" (Holy Qur'an, 8:27-28). A man's love for his family and clan can lead to nepotism and giving people what they do not deserve. This is betrayal.

Allah supports those who fulfill their duties toward trusts, even if they have to struggle with their personal inclinations. Allah protects them, their properties, and their children. Conversely, Allah punishes those who betray their trusts and follow their personal inclinations, by causing them humiliation and the destruction of their wealth. There is a well-known story about an Abbasid Caliph who asked a scholar about his experiences. He said: "I was around during the time of Caliph Omar Ibn Abd Al-Aziz. Someone told the Caliph when he was on his deathbed: 'You have deprived your children from all the wealth under your hands, and now you are leaving them in abject poverty'. The Caliph ordered his children summoned. There were about 10 of them, all boys and still very young. When he saw them, his eyes filled up with tears. He then said, 'My dear children, I swear to Allah, I never deprived you of anything you were entitled to, and I was not the kind of man who would take people's money and give it to you. You are going to be one of two: an honest man whom Allah will take care of, or a dishonest man whom I left no money to disobey Allah with.'" The narrator said: "Years later, I saw one of his children offering a hundred horses to fighters in Allah's cause."⁽²⁾ Omar Ibn Abd Al-Aziz was a Caliph who ruled over one of the largest Caliphates. He ruled all the way from the lands of the Turks to the east to the Maghreb and Andalusia to the west, and from Cypress and the Levant to the north to Yemen to the south. When he died, each of his children inherited less than 20 dirhams. I was also around during the time of another Caliph. When he died, each of his children inherited 600,000 dinars. Later on, I saw some of them begging in the streets."

There are many similar stories for those who wish to learn, and there are many hadiths to the same effect:

(1) Narrated by Ahmed (weak; 13302) Abu Dawud on judgeships (3578), Al-Tirmidhi on legal rulings (1324), Ibn Majah also on legal rulings (2309), and Al-Albani in *Ḍa'if al-Jāmi'* (weak; 5688).

(2) See *Majmū' al-Fatāwā* (Anthology of Edicts); 28/249.

The Prophet (PBUH) once told Abu Dhar: “Leadership is a trust, and on the Day of Judgment, it is all regrets, except for those who received it rightfully and served rightfully.”⁽¹⁾

Abu Hurayrah narrates that the Prophet (PBUH) said: “If trusts are betrayed, wait for the Final Hour.” Someone asked: “How can they be betrayed?” He said: “If matters are entrusted to those who are not qualified, wait for the Final Hour.” Scholars of hadith agree that this hadith concerns betrayals by guardians of orphans and endowments. Allah says: “Do not approach the orphan’s property except in a way that is best” (Holy Qur’an, 17:34).

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “You are all guardians and are responsible for your subjects. A ruler is a guardian of his subjects; a man is a guardian of his family; a woman in her husband’s house is a guardian and is responsible for her subjects; a servant is responsible for his master’s property.”⁽²⁾

The Prophet (PBUH) also says: “If Allah entrusts a man and he dies betraying his trust, Allah forbids him to smell heaven.”⁽³⁾

Abu Muslim Al-Khawlani went to Mu`awiya Ibn Abi Sufyan, the Caliph. Abu Muslim greeted the Caliph: “Peace be upon you, Oh laborer.” Those present said: “Say, ‘Peace be upon you, Oh Caliph’.” He repeated it three more times despite their corrections. Mu`awiya said: “Leave Abu Muslim alone. He knows what he is saying.” Abu Muslim responded: “Indeed, you are a laborer. Allah has hired you to be a shepherd to care for your flock. If you treat the sick and take care of all of them, your master will reward you well. Otherwise, he will punish you.”⁽⁴⁾ The moral of this story is obvious. All people are Allah’s servants, and leaders are entrusted with Allah’s servants. The ruler and the people are like business partners. If the ruler favors his relatives or friends, he has betrayed the people, just like a business partner who sells jointly owned goods at a lower price to a friend or a relative.

Thus, rulers are not to appoint anyone but the most qualified. If the most qualified is not available, the second most qualified, and so on and so forth for each position. If a ruler does this to the best of his ability, he has fulfilled his duty and established justice. If he could not do his best for reasons he cannot control, Allah says: “Fear Allah as much as you are able” (Holy Qur’an, 64:16); and “Allah does not charge a soul except [within] its capacity” (Holy Qur’an, 2:286). Leadership is a form of jihad, and Allah says: “Fight, [Oh Mohammed], in the cause of Allah; you are not held responsible except for yourself” (Holy Qur’an, 4:84); and “Oh you

(1) Narrated by Muslim on leadership (1825) and Ahmed (21513).

(2) Narrated via Ibn Omar by Al-Bukhari on lending money (2409) and Muslim on leadership (1829).

(3) Narrated via Ma`qil Ibn Yassar by Muslim on faith (142).

(4) Narrated by Abu Nuaym in *Hilyat Al-Awliyā* (2/125) and Ibn `Asakir in his *Tārīkh* (27/223).

who have believed, upon you is [responsibility for] yourselves. Those who have gone astray will not harm you when you have been guided” (Holy Qur’an, 5:105). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “If you were commanded a matter, do as much as you can.”⁽¹⁾ However, a leader who forsakes his duty out of negligence or betrayal is to be punished.

The second component of leadership is power. Allah says: “Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy” (Holy Qur’an, 28:26). The King of Egypt told Joseph: “You are today established [in position] and trusted” (Holy Qur’an, 12:54). Allah describes Gabriel in “The Holy Qur’an is a word [conveyed by] a noble messenger [who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position], Obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy” (Holy Qur’an, 81:19-21).

Different types of leadership require different types of power. For example, military leadership requires courage, strategy, and fighting skills, such as riding, swordsmanship, archery, and others. Allah says: “Prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy” (Holy Qur’an, 8:60). The Prophet (PBUH) says: “Learn archery and horseback riding. I prefer for you to use archery, and whoever learns archery and forgets it is not one of us.”⁽²⁾ In another version, he says: “...and whoever learns archery and forgets it is ungrateful to Allah’s blessing.”⁽³⁾ By the same token, the power needed for judicial leadership is knowledge of justice as detailed in the Holy Qur’an and the Sunnah and the ability to impose legal rulings.

In summary, acting in a trustworthy way is a matter that requires fearing Allah and ignoring fear of people. Allah requires these traits from anyone who is in a leadership position: “Do not fear the people but fear Me, and do not exchange My verses for a small price. And whoever does not judge by what Allah has revealed – then it is those who are the disbelievers” (Holy Qur’an, 5:44).

The Prophet (PBUH) says: “A judge is one of three men, two in hell and one in heaven. These are: one who knows the truth, but judges differently, and is therefore in hell; one who is ignorant and judges among people accordingly, and is therefore, in hell; and one who knows the truth and judges accordingly, and is therefore in heaven.”⁽⁴⁾ Note that a judge is anyone who makes a decision between

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on adhering to the Qur’an and the Sunnah (7288) and Muslim on *Hajj* (1337).

(2) Narrated via Uqba Ibn Amir by Muslim on leadership (1919).

(3) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bazzar (9095), Al-Tabarani in *Al-Şaghîr* (543) and *Al-Awsaṭ* (4117), Al-Mundhiri in *Al-Targhîb wal-Tarhîb* (2028), and Al-Albani in *Şaḥîḥ Al-Targhîb wal-Tarhîb* (1294).

(4) Narrated via Buraydah by Abu Dawud on legislation (3573), Al-Tirmidhi on legal rulings (1322), Ibn Majah also on legal rulings (2315), Al-Hakim (4/90), and Al-Albani in *Şaḥîḥ Al-Jāmi’* (4446).

people; thus, a judge in this context can be the Caliph, someone acting on behalf of the Caliph, a governor, or even someone judging in a penmanship competition for children.⁽¹⁾

Justice

As discussed earlier, justice is the foundation of life for the individual, the family, the community, and the nation state in Islam. In fact, Allah makes justice the ultimate purpose of all monotheistic religions: “We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidence and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice” (Holy Qur’an, 57:25). Justice protects people’s rights, material or otherwise: “The heaven He raised and imposed the balance that you not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance” (Holy Qur’an, 55:7-9).

Allah commands us to be just to ourselves, by balancing our rights with Allah’s rights and people’s rights. When Abdullah Ibn Amr spent most of his time worshipping, the Prophet (PBUH) said to him: “Your body has a right on you, your eyes have a right on you, your wife has a right on you, and your guests have a right on you.”⁽²⁾ Allah also commands us to establish justice within our families by treating our children equally and, in cases of polygamy, to treat the wives equally. Allah says: “If you fear that you will not deal justly with orphan girls, marry those you like, two or three or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one” (Holy Qur’an, 4:3). The Prophet (PBUH) orders the faithful not to have favorites among their children either: “Fear Allah and be just between your children.”⁽³⁾ Bashir Ibn Saad Al-Ansari asked the Prophet (PBUH) to be a witness for his will, in which he bequeathed extra money to one of his children. The Prophet (PBUH) asked him: “Did you bequeath the same to all your children?” He said: “No”. The Prophet (PBUH) responded: “Find someone else to be your witness. I do not serve as witness to injustice.”⁽⁴⁾

Allah commands us to be just with everyone, including those we like and those we do not like. When it comes to justice, we cannot let our emotions lead us into favoring those we like and doing injustice to those we do not like. Allah says: “Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm in justice, witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives” (Holy Qur’an, 4:135); and “Oh you who have believed, persistently stand firm for Allah, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is

(1) See *Al-Siyāsa Al-Shar’iyya*. Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments: KSA, 1418 A.H.: 13-15.

(2) Narrated via Abdullah Ibn Amr by Al-Bukhari (1975) and Muslim (1159), both on fasting.

(3) Narrated via Al-Numan Ibn Bashir by Al-Bukhari (2587) and Muslim (1687), both on gifts.

(4) Narrated via Al-Numan Ibn Bashir by Muslim on gifts (1623).

nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do” (Holy Qur’an, 5:8).

Justice also means giving truthful testimonies, regardless of our feelings about the subject or the people involved. Moreover, justice requires us to give testimony if asked, and to speak up if we are directly asked to testify. Allah says:

- *“When you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative” (Holy Qur’an, 6:152).*
- *“Let not the witnesses refuse when they are called upon” (Holy Qur’an, 2:282).*
- *“Do not conceal testimony, for whoever conceals it - his heart is indeed sinful” (Holy Qur’an, 2:283).*
- *“Bring to witness two just men from among you and establish the testimony for [the acceptance of] Allah” (Holy Qur’an, 65:2).*

For justice to be served and established, judges have to be fair: “Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due, and when you judge between people to judge with justice” (Holy Qur’an, 4:58). There are numerous hadiths on the “benevolent judge” who is one of the seven people Allah shades on the Day when there is no other shade,⁽¹⁾ and one of the three whose prayers are always answered.⁽²⁾

Finally, injustice is strictly forbidden in Islam, whether it is injustice toward oneself or others, especially when the powerful and the rich inflict injustice on the poor and weak. The Prophet (PBUH) once told Mu`adh: “Beware of the prayers of those who had injustice done to them, for there is nothing between their prayers and Allah.”⁽³⁾ He also said: “Allah raises the prayers of those who had injustice done to them over the clouds and opens the gates of heaven for them. Then, he says, ‘By My might, I will make you victorious, even if later’.”⁽⁴⁾

Social justice is paramount in Islam. It means distributing wealth fairly, giving all people equal opportunity and fair wages, and minimizing economic disparities. Islam achieves social justice in many ways, such as feeding the poor and encouraging others to do the same. Allah says:

(1) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Al-Bukhari on the call for prayers (660) and Muslim on the solar eclipse (1031).

(2) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8043), Al-Tirmidhi on supplications (3598), and Ibn Majah on fasting (1752).

(3) Narrated via Ibn Abbas by Al-Bukhari on *Zakat* (1496) and Muslim on faith (19).

(4) Narrated via Abu Hurayrah by Ahmed (8043), Al-Tirmidhi on supplications (3598), and Ibn Majah on fasting (1752).

- *"What put you into Saqar [hellfire]?" They will say: "We were not among those who prayed, nor did we feed the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 74:42-44).*
- *"Have you seen the one who denies the Recompense? For that is the one who drives away the orphan - And does not encourage the feeding of the poor" (Holy Qur'an, 107:1-3).*
- *"Seize him and shackle him. Then into Hellfire drive him. Then into a chain whose length is 70 cubits insert him." Indeed, he did not believe in Allah, the Most Great, nor did he encourage the feeding of the poor (69:30-34).*
- *"No! But you do not honor the orphan, and you do not encourage one another to feed the poor. You consume inheritance, devouring [it] altogether, wealth" (89:17-20).*

Islam gives a special status to the struggling classes, as it provides them with social welfare and the opportunities to rise in society and become self-sufficient. Islamic rulings and social justice provide the poor with employment opportunities, fair wages, food security, and medical care. Social justice in Islam is achieved in many ways, including *Zakat*, which is the third pillar of the faith.

4.3.5. The Ethics Of The World Community

Global ethics here refers to the moral values that guide the behavior of Muslims around the world when interacting with non-Muslims and the interactions between the Muslim Ummah with other nations. While Muslims are only one part of the world, their message is directed to the entire world. The Muslim Ummah heeds Allah's call, and the rest of the world is to be invited to the call: "Blessed is He who sent down the Criterion upon His Servant that he may warn the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 25:1). Allah addresses the Prophet (PBUH): "We have not sent you, [Oh Mohammed], except as a mercy to the worlds" (Holy Qur'an, 21:107). In this verse, Allah specifies the mission of His Prophet: He is a mercy to all people everywhere in the world, and to other beings as well, including the jinn and the angels.

Given the message and the mission of Islam, the Muslim Ummah has to have special relations with all other nations. These relations are to be based on peace. Allah says, "Oh you who have believed, enter into peace completely and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy" (Holy Qur'an, 2:208). Muslims have a mandate to live in peace and to spread peace around the world. After all, the Arabic word for Islam is derived from a root that means "peace".

Peace permeates Muslim life. Even when Muslims meet, they greet each other with the word for peace, and in heaven the angels welcome the faithful with the

greeting of peace. One of Allah's attributes, often referred to as the names of Allah, is Al-Salām, which means "peace", hence the Arabic name "Abd Al-Salam", which means "the Servant of Peace". Allah says:

- *"When you are greeted with a greeting, greet [back] with a better greeting or [at least] return it [in the same manner]" (Holy Qur'an, 4:86).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, when you go forth [to fight] in the cause of Allah, investigate; and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace 'You are not a believer', aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions" (Holy Qur'an, 4:94).*
- *"Their greeting the Day they meet Him will be, 'Peace'. And He has prepared for them a noble reward" (Holy Qur'an, 33:44).*
- *"Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home" (Holy Qur'an, 13:24).*
- *"For them will be the Home of Peace with their Lord. And He will be their protecting friend because of what they used to do" (Holy Qur'an, 6:127).*
- *"He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Peace, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior" (Holy Qur'an, 59:23).*

Thus, the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are based on peace, as long as they are peaceful. The Holy Qur'an is very clear about the issue of conflict between Muslims and non-Muslims. Muslims are required to fight back, but not to be the aggressors: "Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like transgressors" (Holy Qur'an, 2:190). The Prophet (PBUH) often responded to aggression with kindness, following Allah's words: "Is the reward for good [anything] but good?" (Holy Qur'an, 55:60); and "Pardon them and overlook [their misdeeds]. Indeed, Allah loves those who do good deeds" (Holy Qur'an, 5:13). Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) never fought against anyone unless they took the initiative to fight, and he never fought against non-combatants, such as women, children, the elderly, and civilians. An unbelieving woman was once found dead on the battlefield. He said: "She should not have been killed."⁽¹⁾ He also said: "Do not kill a child or an elderly person."⁽²⁾ The Prophet's (PBUH) companions continued in his footsteps, as they did not attack non-combatants or civilians. In summary, aggression is categorically forbidden in

(1) Narrated via Rabah Ibn Rabia by Ahmed (15992) and Abu Dawud on jihad (2669).

(2) Narrated via Burayda Ibn Al-Haseeb by Muslim on jihad and the companions' biographies (1731) *sans* "or an elderly person" and Al-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* (1431).

Islam, yet Muslims are required to defend themselves and to persevere in fighting once they have no other option: "Kill them wherever you overtake them and expel them from wherever they have expelled you, and fitnah is worse than killing. And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there. But if they fight you, then kill them. Such is the recompense of the disbelievers. But if they cease, then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful" (Holy Qur'an, 2:191-192).

One of the main principles that underline the Islamic approach to international relations is that civil unrest is worse than killing: "And fitnah [civil unrest] is greater than killing" (Holy Qur'an, 2:217). While killing is the destruction of material life, civil unrest, which is the result of oppression and injustice, is the destruction of spiritual life, free will, and the essence of humanity. Allah says: "And do not fight them at al-Masjid al-Haram until they fight you there." The Ka'ba [al-Masjid al-Haram] is a sacred place, and fighting is not allowed in sacred places, but those who have no regard for what is sacred have to be fought back in self-defense. Allah says:

- *"[Fighting during] the sacred months is for [aggression committed in] the sacred months, and for [all] violations is legal retribution. Whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you. And fear Allah and know that Allah is with those who fear Him" (Holy Qur'an, 2:194).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, do not violate the rites of Allah or [the sanctity of] the sacred months or [neglect the marking of] the sacrificial animals and garlanding [them] or [violate the safety of] those coming to the Ka'ba seeking bounty from their Lord and [His] approval" (Holy Qur'an, 5:2).*
- *"They ask you [Oh Mohammed] about the sacred months - about fighting therein. Say, 'Fighting therein is great [sin], but averting [people] from the way of Allah and disbelief in Him and [preventing access to] al-Masjid al-haram and the expulsion of its people therefrom are greater [evil] in the sight of Allah. And fitnah is greater than killing'. And they will continue to fight you until they turn you back from your religion if they are able. And whoever of you reverts from his religion [to disbelief] and dies while he is a disbeliever - for those, their deeds have become worthless in this world and the Hereafter, and those are the companions of the Fire, they will abide therein eternally" (Holy Qur'an, 2:217).*
- *"Prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged" (Holy Qur'an, 8:60).*

- *"When you are among them and lead them in prayer, let a group of them stand [in prayer] with you and let them carry their arms. And when they have prostrated, let them be [in position] behind you and have the other group come forward which has not [yet] prayed and let them pray with you, taking precaution and carrying their arms. Those who disbelieve wish that you would neglect your weapons and your gear so they could come down upon you in one [single] attack. But there is no blame upon you, if you are troubled by rain or are ill, for putting down your arms, but take precaution. Indeed, Allah has prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment. And when you have completed the prayer, remember Allah standing, sitting, or [lying] on your sides. But when you become secure, re-establish [regular] prayer. Indeed, prayer has been decreed upon the believers a decree of specified times. And do not weaken in pursuit of the enemy. If you should be suffering - so are they suffering as you are suffering, but you expect from Allah that which they expect not. And Allah is ever Knowing and Wise" (Holy Qur'an, 4:102-104).*
- *"Oh you who have believed, take your precaution and [either] go forth in companies or go forth all together" (Holy Qur'an, 4:71).*
- *"If they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. But if they intend to deceive you - then sufficient for you is Allah. It is He who supported you with His help and with the believers" (Holy Qur'an, 8:61-62).*

As Allah specifically commands, Muslims have to choose peace if their enemies so choose. Finally, the purpose of fighting in Islam is not worldly gain, but to end oppression, restore freedom, and allow people to worship Allah as they should. Anyone who reads the Holy Qur'an realizes that the doors are always open for people to live in peace, but they should also be prepared to defend themselves when necessary. Muslims should fight only in self-defense and choose peace whenever possible, even if peace might be deceitful, for it is only Allah who protects and supports.

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